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**Art and Authority: A Comparative Study of the Modernist Aesthetics of Ezra Pound**

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## Table of Contents

	page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Pound: Art, Myth and the Manufacture of Cultural History	9
Pound and Aestheticisation	15
Art, <i>Virtù</i> and Aesthetic Foundation	34
Chapter 2. Pound: The Aesthetics and Poetics of De-Authorisation	46
The De-authorised 'Figure' of the Divine	59
Between Nature and Metaphor: Ideogram, Figure, Metamorphosis	71
<i>Coda</i> : Pound and Eliot	80
Chapter 3. Eliot and Pound: Artifice and Augmentation	83
Criticism Against Culture	90
Poetics Against Aesthetics	102
Chapter 4. Joyce and Pound: The Critical and Realigned Aesthetic	117
Joyce's Bloom: The Mess and the Mass	124
<i>Ulysses</i> and <i>A Portrait</i> : The Reverse Reading of Authority	136
Chapter 5. Lawrence and Pound: The Aesthetics of Antagonism	152
Lawrence <i>contra</i> Pound: Against the Aesthetics of Power	157
<i>The Plumed Serpent</i> : Art on the Edge of Failure	175
In Conclusion	181
Bibliography	190

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## Summary

Due to the pressure to define a contemporary literature, 'High' modernism in English is often presented as a univocal canon of authors and works whose ideals have been identified and surpassed. This study attempts to re-emphasise the diversity of this writing by showing how crises in inherited authority were 'staged' by its aesthetics. The manner of this staging is examined in the writings and programmes of a selected group of authors while a focus is provided by the aesthetics of Ezra Pound. Pound's work is taken to be of especial interest because of the scope of his influence in establishing a 'modern' movement, the extremism of his writing's antagonism to authority, and the ambiguity of critical responses that the politics of his project continue to elicit. Chapter 1 examines the ways in which Pound promotes an 'aesthetics' of history and politics as the key to contemporary revolutionary change, and views his writing through a body of thinking which considers that the artwork, and not authority, might 'found' a modern culture. Chapter 2 treats Pound's metaphysics, showing how 'de-authorised' conceptions of religion, sexuality and language underpin this project. Chapter 3 deals with the writing of T. S. Eliot, and with the particular anti-aesthetics that inhabit his criticism and the draft of *The Waste Land*. Eliot's project is shown to oppose Pound's by defining a desired authority against the power of art, an opposition that Pound's editing of *The Waste Land* effectively masks. Chapter 4 discusses the 'mass' aesthetics of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and shows that the processes of self-interrogation that feature in this work realign the antipathy between art and authority in ways that militate against the ideals of a Poundian art of 'power'. Chapter 5 treats the work of D. H. Lawrence as a site where an empowered art and culture is both overtly promoted and intrinsically challenged. The proximity of Lawrence's programmatic modernism to Pound's is stressed, while an inbuilt antagonism to its own ideals is shown to sharply distinguish the dynamic trajectory of Lawrencean aesthetics from a Poundian art of self-authorisation. While establishing the antagonism between art and authority as a common focus for modernism, this study underlines differences and antipathies that emerge between the projects and texts under discussion, charting the diversity of responses to a commonly felt crisis. The study concludes with a discussion of Pound's post-war poetry, examining the fate of a writer who failed to extend into his own aesthetics the insights that modern crises in authority delivered.

## Introduction

In *The Concept of Modernism* Astradur Eysteinsson suggests that 'The self-conscious break with tradition must, I think, be seen as the hallmark of modernism', as it is 'the one feature that seems capable of lending the concept a critical coherence that most of us can agree on'. While insisting that 'the subversion of the *authority* of tradition' or of '*tradition itself*' must be regarded as 'the major achievement of modernism', however, Eysteinsson acknowledges that 'There were also ties being established with traditions' within this writing.<sup>1</sup> Despite the emphasis placed upon modernism's subversion of authority, then, modernist writing can be seen to describe an ambivalent double-movement in its engagement with tradition and authority. Arguably, this occurs because the practice of modernist writing, like modernity itself, has the concept of authority, and of its various traditions and histories, bound to it as a structural effect of the imperative to *be* modern. Indeed, an engagement with the authority of the past in a 'positive' or 'negative' sense (or as a 'flight' *from* it that is simultaneously a projection *of* it) might be seen as a *precondition* of the modern.<sup>2</sup>

One of the premisses of this study is that the writers under discussion engaged with this 'effect' of modernity, but engaged with it, specifically, on the ground of art and aesthetics, for in approaching authority through the category of art modernism sought to renegotiate its ground. This engagement can in itself be considered as a defining characteristic of modernism, but it is an engagement that actually re-stages, in extreme form, a distinction or antagonism between art and authority that inaugurated the history of Western culture. Modernism returns, as it were, to a critical point in the history of the

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1. Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), quotations are taken from pp. 52-3 and p. 137 (note that throughout this study, unless otherwise stated, emphases in quotations are features of the source text).

2. For an analysis of modernity as a condition which necessarily 'projects' a past while presenting itself as discontinuous with it see Jean Baudrillard's 'Modernity', translated by D. J. Miller, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, II, 3 (1987), pp. 63-72.



concept of authority in order to discover its own concerns, and a short outline of this history will show that definitions of art and authority are themselves structurally interdependent.

When the political philosopher Hannah Arendt approaches the status of authority in the 'modern world' she does so hesitantly, asking not what *is* but what *was* authority:

... we are tempted and entitled to raise this question because authority has vanished from the modern world. Since we can no longer fall back upon authentic and indisputable experiences common to all, the very term has become clouded by controversy and confusion.<sup>3</sup>

Arendt's scepticism about the concept in itself identifies her as a 'modern', for she is concerned not with the institutions or structures of authority but with their *possibility*. Her approach thus focuses upon questions of new beginnings for politics, new acts which might revitalise authority for modernity and re-realise its function.<sup>4</sup>

But it is the history of authority as Arendt formulates it that is relevant here. Although the treatment of issues pertaining to art and representation appear only tangential to her discussion, they arise at a crucial point in the definition of the origins of an authority which she approaches as an indissociable fusion of Greek and Roman political thinking. The concept of authority is informed by a Platonism which locates its own ideal and originary source outside the mundane sphere of politics. At the same time, it partakes of a Roman concern with the civic and symbolic act of foundation. In its Roman guise authority or *auctoritas* is defined as that which literally binds and obligates by issuing from the ancestral act of the foundation of Rome, from which radiated an empire, and to which was owed the obligation of obedience and augmentation. Arendt claims that

The word *auctoritas* derives from the verb *augere*, 'augment', and what authority or those in authority constantly augment is the foundation...

In order to understand more completely what it meant to be in authority, it may be useful to notice that the word *auctores* can be used as the very opposite of the *artifices*, the actual builders and makers, and this precisely when the word *auctor* signifies the same thing as our 'author'...<sup>5</sup>

At the same time that Arendt posits a continuity between *auctoritas* and modern authorship the category of art can be seen to inhabit an ambiguous position on the border between that which is authoritative and that which can be construed as a mere 'work' or 'making' - an ungrounded 'artifice'.

What Arendt's definition silently invokes here is the antagonism between artifice and authority that

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3. Hannah Arendt, 'What is Authority?', in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, enlarged edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 91-141, p. 91.

4. For a discussion of Arendt as a thinker concerned mainly with the possibilities of a new beginning for political authority see David Miller's review essay 'Hannah Arendt and the Greek Polis', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9th July 1993, pp. 6-7, p. 7.

5. 'What is Authority?', pp. 121-2; on the concept of *auctoritas* see also E. D. Watt, *Authority* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1982), chapter 1.

Plato insists upon in the tenth book of *The Republic*. Here the 'truth-value' of poetry and artistry *vis-à-vis* the authority of the state is at issue:

We must ask ourselves whether those who have met the poets have, when they see or hear their works, failed to perceive that they are representations at the third remove from reality [neither original nor manufactured forms], and easy to produce without any knowledge of the truth, because they are appearances and not realities.<sup>6</sup>

Art, for Plato, can have only an illegitimate and subversive relation to the 'real' interests of the state. To submit to the emotive powers of artifice is to allow 'pleasure and pain' (*Republic*, p. 437) to rule in lieu of rational state authority, which, grounded as it is in the sovereignty of philosophy, must subjugate the poetic as the 'bitch that growls and snarls at her master' (p. 438). What is actually at issue in this dialogue is the *proximity* of the 'resemblances', 'apparitions' (p. 426) and qualities of 'superficial likeness' (p. 429) that can be produced by the artist to 'actual' natures, and what is apparent is the ease with which the creations of the 'manufacturer' can supplant the real or 'essential natures' of which god is the 'author' (p. 425). Danger resides, then, in the ability of art to create through a 'craft' that is deemed an insubstantial reflection or *mimesis*: 'take a mirror and turn it round in all directions; before long you will create sun and stars and earth, yourself and all other animals and plants' (p. 425). However, situated as it is on the border that marks the difference between the legitimate and the illegitimate, and without knowledge of the 'essence' of its objects - indeed with an emphasis on the 'unreasoning part' of the creative mind - art threatens to 'level' the hierarchy of forms and emulate the conditions in which reason 'cannot distinguish greater and less' (p. 435).

Of course, the ideal state is *itself* a fiction in *The Republic*, as its authority is grounded upon a 'magnificent myth' whose relation to a 'story like those the poets tell' (p. 181) Plato does not hide. But this exacerbates rather than mitigates the antipathy between art and the authoritative. As will be seen, it is the potential ability of art to mimic, parody, image alternatives to and even usurp the authority of the 'real' that modernism will re-introduce onto the stage of history. The determining factors behind this re-staging are complex, and can perhaps be approached most concisely through an outline of the historical role of literature within the 'modern'.

Within this history the concept of authority undergoes a crisis at the time of the Renaissance that was actually a rejuvenation. In *On Modern Authority* Thomas Docherty suggests that this period was the birthplace of a modernity which saw a 'pluralisation' of authorities (through the advent of the notion of 'alternatives') in the wake of the Reformation, a pluralisation which was consolidated by the

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6. Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Edmund Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 427.



'end' of feudal Europe in the revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> Such pluralisation can be expressed through a metaphor of authorship if it is regarded as the demise of the 'allegorical' role of the writer - allegory being a mode of meaning which functions only as it relates to and augments a prior authority. What the Renaissance officiated at was the birth of the modern individuated and *initiating* author. Donald Pease presents this period as

... the appearance of what Renaissance historians now refer to as "new men," individuals within Renaissance culture who turned the "news" sent home from freshly discovered lands into forms of cultural empowerment for unprecedented political actions and their personification by new agents within the culture. Among these new cultural agents were "authors", writers whose claim to cultural authority did not depend on their adherence to cultural precedents but on a faculty of verbal inventiveness. Unlike the medieval *auctor* who based his authority on divine revelation, an author *himself* claimed authority for his words and based his individuality on the stories he composed.<sup>8</sup>

One way that the 'crises' in authority which culminated in twentieth-century modernism might be configured is as the demise of the author as *auctor* within this cultural tradition. This tradition had existed, since the Renaissance, as a source of affirmative invention and 'empowerment' within a burgeoning capitalist culture - a culture which for many reasons was now, or was perceived to be, in crisis. Although the relationship between dominant cultural authority and literature has always been problematic, cumulative crises within this culture determined a 'late' separation of literature from its emancipatory and augmentative role within this history. Thus, at the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, literature would be propelled, through a *fin de siècle* recurrence of 'plural' models of cultural authority, into a tendency to reflect upon its autonomous, adversarial or 'artificial' status in relation to its own cultural base.<sup>9</sup>

Presented in this way, literary modernism inherits a culture in which augmentation is no longer possible and the role of *auctor* no longer available. Culture appears to be either in a condition of deterioration or radical change, but both these states have a particularly 'literary' inflection for modernism. This occurs because cultural authority and legitimacy, when in crisis, can themselves be configured in terms of a pervasive artifice. Thus modernity confronts itself and the crises in its own

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7. See Thomas Docherty, *On Modern Authority: The Theory and Condition of Writing 1500 to the Present Day* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), especially pp. 47-54.

8. Donald E. Pease, 'Author' in *Critical Terms For Literary Study*, edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 105-117, p. 107. Of the 'allegorical' mode of writing Pease writes that 'To experience an event in allegorical terms was to transpose the event out of the realm of one's personal life into the realm of the applicable authority' (p. 106).

9. For an analysis of the crisis of authority in the late nineteenth century see Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism: Authority, Knowledge and Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), chapters 1 and 6; for a discussion of an early modernist rejection of its own culture imaged as an antipathy between art and its audience see Jean-Paul Sartre's *What Is Literature?*, translated by Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 88.

history with a strong sense of the 'formalism' of historical discourses and a growing awareness of an 'extension of the sense of the conventional'<sup>10</sup> which undermines cultural legitimacy. This pervasive sense of 'artifice' has become one of the major legacies of modernism, for it established an homology between discourse and world which worked to expose the 'formalism' of the real - or a fundamental indeterminacy in the apprehension of any general 'content' as distinct from the forms that contained, ordered and determined it. Nietzsche, the iconoclast of the modern, would accurately herald the emergence of such indeterminacy when he wrote of the inhabitant of the contemporary 'becoming' an artist insofar as modernity demands that content be regarded as an effect of form: 'henceforth' he declared, 'content becomes something merely formal - our life included'.<sup>11</sup>

Recently, Michel Foucault would echo Nietzsche when writing of modernism's inherent self-reflexivity functioning 'as if... discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form', and in suggesting that for modernism language and writing themselves become 'an object of knowledge'<sup>12</sup> he seeks to evoke something of the complexity with which historical discourses, knowledge and the 'artifice' of aesthetics interact in modern thinking. John Frow has attempted to define the path of contemporary critical theory by suggesting that a 'crucial step' taken by it involved the transition 'from thinking intertextuality in relation to a *cultural* text to thinking social structure as a whole through the metaphor of textuality'.<sup>13</sup> Such thinking of the 'whole' through 'the metaphor of textuality' was, however, one of the major initiatives of modernism itself, for its own intertextual practices often carried within them a sense of the collapse of social discourses *into* the realm of their own artifice. This has resulted, as Roland Barthes has pointed out, in a modern art and literature which 'carries at the same time the alienation of History and the dream of History'; that is, that while inherited discourses are perceived as the vehicle of an obsolete authority, the manner in which the ubiquity of discourse and its forms have revealed themselves to modernity has determined that language, and the relatively 'autonomous' realm of literary writing in particular, remains the space where delivery from

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10. I take this phrase from William Connolly's editorial essay 'Legitimacy and Modernity' in *Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 1-19, p. 3.

11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 433.

12. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 300.

13. John Frow, 'Intertextuality and Ontology', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, edited by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 45-55, p. 47.



this authority must be negotiated. 'Literature', as Barthes proclaims, becomes for modernity 'the Utopia of language'.<sup>14</sup>

This study will stress the diversity of the engagements between art and authority that feature in the comparatively well-charted canon of 'High' modernism in English. The writing of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence will provide this study's focus, and these writers have been brought together for reasons which will be entered into shortly. First, it is necessary to account for the omission of one of the most significant 'canonical' writers from this treatment - Virginia Woolf.

Woolf's relevance to any discussion of art and authority is evident, not least, in the *ambiguity* of her response to modernity itself - an ambiguity that is especially apparent in her critical writing. Her influential essay 'Modern Fiction' forcefully contrasted the 'vague and inconclusive' nature of recent experimental approaches to fictional representation and form to the 'materialist' concerns of earlier practitioners of realism - practitioners who, by their insistence upon the 'solidity' of the 'fabric' which they treated, appeared to Woolf to make the arbitrary and 'transitory appear the true and enduring'. In her reaction against what she felt to be calcified aesthetic assumptions Woolf's ideals remained indefinite, and, in being stated as freedoms from prior conventions and codes, valorised the non-coincidence of the 'real' and its representation:

Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide.<sup>15</sup>

As well as being a 'call to arms' for experimental writers, 'Modern Fiction' was also a review of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a work whose disruption of realist conventions was extreme. At the same time that Woolf applauds the way that Joyce's novel draws attention to the arbitrary yet 'material' authority of the codes that govern inherited modes of writing, however, she judges that the shifts in focus that the novel promotes actually ensnare the reader, once again, in arbitrary and trivial codes. The reader of *Ulysses*, she claims, is finally re-confined 'rather than enlarged and set free' ('Modern Fiction', p. 151).

In 'How it Strikes a Contemporary', a later and less programmatic essay whose dominant tone is uncertainty and temerity, Woolf would actually adduce *Ulysses* as evidence that the moderns themselves were experiencing a 'crisis' or a 'catastrophe' resultant upon a too radical disengagement from the past - a crisis which only a return to critical authority could rectify:

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14. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 73.

15. 'Modern Fiction', in *The Common Reader: First Series* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), pp. 146-154, pp. 148-9. Woolf's essay 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (in *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* [London: The Hogarth Press, 1981], pp. 90-111) also rehearses these concerns by asking 'what is reality? And who are the judges of reality?' (p. 97).



*Ulysses* was a memorable catastrophe - immense in daring, terrific in disaster. And so, picking and choosing we select now this, now that, hold it up for display... even so we are only agreeing with the critics that it is an age incapable of sustained effort, littered with fragments, and not seriously to be compared with the age that went before...

... No age can be more rich than ours in writers determined to give expression to the differences which separate them from the past and not to the resemblances which connect them with it... But our exhilaration has been strangely curtailed. Book after book leaves us with the strange sense of promise unachieved...

... Now, then, it is time to accept their [the critics'] advice and correct these extremes by consulting the masterpieces of the past.<sup>16</sup>

Woolf's earlier celebration of the role of modern literature in challenging hegemonic cultural conventions collapses, when considered in terms of a broader historical significance, into a desire for an authoritative consensus within culture which will provide the work with a substance, a status and a cultural relation to precedent values. Like Arendt, Woolf laments the fact that authority is becoming increasingly unavailable for the modern:

Once upon a time, we must believe, there was a rule, a discipline, which controlled the great republic of readers in a way which is now unknown. That is not to say that the great critic - the Dryden, the Johnson, the Coleridge, the Arnold - was an impeccable judge of contemporary work... But the mere fact of their existence had a centralising influence. That alone... would have controlled the disagreements of the dinner-table and given to random chatter about some book just out an authority now entirely to seek.

(*'How it Strikes a Contemporary'*, p. 233)

Again anticipating Arendt, Woolf would imply that a literary landscape 'littered with fragments' betrays the fact that modern culture was approaching an ungrounded or 'artificial' condition, and in the closing paragraph of the essay she metaphorically expresses the desire for a transformation in which the 'unfounded' and maverick 'making' of an *artifex* might become the augmentative and impersonal work of an *auctor*:

Let them [the critics] take a wider, a less personal view of modern literature, and look indeed upon the writers as if they were engaged upon some vast building, which being built by common effort, the separate workmen may well remain anonymous. (p. 240)

Woolf's desire for a 'building' augmented by 'common effort' utilises a key metaphor of authority, for the metaphoric importance of the building in the symbolism of authority is surpassed only by the metaphor of the founded 'city'. However, for the later Woolf, the city is precisely that which can be repudiated:

... if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical.<sup>17</sup>

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16. *'How It Strikes a Contemporary'*, in *The Common Reader*, pp. 231-41, p. 235 and p. 237.

17. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Granada, 1985), p. 93.



While ambiguity characterises Woolf's writings upon modern art and its relation to authority, her gender, as this passage suggests, would essentially locate her on the margins of authority's ambit and allow her writing to chart areas 'outside' of any such 'inheritance'. As recent readings of Woolf's modernism have shown, even the authorial 'anonymity' that she anxiously hoped would feature in the 'common effort' of modern writing would ultimately take a subversive form, for the problematics of the writing self, or the *impossibility* of a coherent 'female' self within history and modernity, would be a theme that pervaded her writing, ensuring that the 'alien and critical' became an inbuilt feature of her modernism.<sup>18</sup>

What the subtext of this study aspires to convey is the way in which modernism might again be viewed, as Woolf viewed it, as a landscape 'littered with fragments'. This is necessary in order to grant to High modernism some integrity as a field of diverse explorations - a diversity which contemporary criticism, perhaps of necessity, often overrides when following its own imperatives to define the multiplicity of the postmodern *against* the now evident conventions of modernism. In any focus upon the relationship between art and authority Woolf's writing has already, as it were, established itself as a locus of experiment and reappraisal. In approaching the distinctly authoritarian impulses of High modernism as they have come to be located in the writing of Ezra Pound, however, this study hopes to uncover elements in High modernism's engagement with authority whose complexity and diversity have become muted. What will be suggested is that Pound's aesthetics actually map another trajectory that was taken in modernism's staging of the antipathy between art and authority, one which promotes art not as a 'critical' force but as that which can 're-found' a modern culture according to criteria which elide the function of authority itself. The work of Eliot and Joyce has been judged appropriate to this treatment not only because they were in some measure 'products' of Pound's 'impresario' endeavour to re-forge a modern culture, but because their own approaches to aesthetics radically depart from, and thus help to define the specific space of, Pound's own. Lawrence enters this Poundian arena not through association but similarity. His own programmatic modernism will be shown to resemble Pound's own while certain features of it - most notably the extension of a scepticism towards authority into the realm of his own art - will help reveal the limits of Pound's aesthetics.

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18. For a recent study of the relation between Woolf's aesthetics and female subjectivity see Makiko Minow-Pinkney's *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987).

## 1. Pound: Art, Myth and the Manufacture of Cultural History

In contemporary assessments of modernism the status of the work of Ezra Pound remains scandalously ambivalent. On one hand the disjunctive and intertextually eclectic form of the bulk of his poetry violates orthodox literary forms and systems of discourse in ways that progressive cultural theory applauds.<sup>1</sup> Pound the controlling 'author' is constantly elided in the matrix of quotations and creative 'imitations' which constitute his verse, while the category of 'literature' itself is challenged by its intertexts and transcriptions.<sup>2</sup> Such writing has the 'capacity to include domains of experience long since considered alien territory', and philosophically anticipates the post-modern in its 'de-centring' ethos and its 'urge to return the material so rigidly excluded - political, ethical, historical, philosophical - to the domain of poetry'.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the notoriety of Pound's politics demands that such textual radicalism be approached with suspicion. Even sympathetic assessments must acknowledge that his project is driven by a literary absolutism, explicit in his wish to become 'lord of his work and master of utterance' and his writing's insistence that 'permanent' and 'recurrent' values circulate within it, for 'Literature is news that STAYS news'.<sup>4</sup> His 'epic' ambitions - or his endeavour to write a modern, authoritative and enduring 'poem including history'<sup>5</sup> - reinforce the sense in which his artistic project might be seen, at

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1. See for example Antony Easthope's discussion of Pound's poetics in *Poetry as Discourse* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), pp. 138-53.

2. This is equally the case with Pound's prose; in *Guide To Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1970) he states 'There is no ownership in most of my statements and I cannot interrupt every sentence or paragraph to attribute authorships... especially as there is seldom an a priori claim even to the phrase or the half phrase' (p. 60).

3. The first quotation is from Michael A. Bernstein's *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 40; the second is taken from Marjorie Perloff's discussion of Pound's influence in 'Postmodernism and the Impasse of Lyric', in *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 172-200, p. 180.

4. Quotations are taken respectively from *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 442, a description of the poem in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, edited by D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 239, and *ABC of Reading* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 29.

5. 'Date Line', in *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 74-87, p. 86.



best, as traditionalist and conservative, and judged as an intensification, rather than a renunciation, of inherited orthodoxies.

At its worst, the essentialist and overtly authoritarian 'economies' of language, nature and culture which permeate Pound's writing can be regarded as the deep structure of a project motivated, as he would configure it, not by a revolution of the word but by its 'castigation':

The befouling of terminology should be put an end to. It is a time for clear definition of terms. Immediately, of economic terms, but ultimately of all terms. It is not a revolution of the word but a castigation of the word. And that castigation must precede any reform.<sup>6</sup>

Treatments of Pound's writing which focus upon its linguistic field often consider his fascism to be the political correlative of such 'corrective' economies of language. Within them the definition, clarity and control which he desires to restore to 'the word' are the antithesis of 'excesses' in cultural signification, excesses which his poetry images in predominantly racial form - Jews becoming the archetype of 'the befoulers' or 'perverts, who have set money-lust / Before the pleasures of the senses' - or in gendered oppositions wherein 'the female / Is a chaos' (*Cantos*, p. 61 and p. 144). 'Pound's adopted modes of writing' thus 'bespeak a particular conception of language which *necessarily* spills into a set of cultural perspectives' whose politics are both repressive and regressive in their endeavour to recover 'a controlled and mastered language... which supposedly can come into unambiguous contact with the truth of the world'.<sup>7</sup>

In related but more ideologically oriented approaches such economies bolster the doctrinal coherence of Pound's thinking and describe the authoritarian foundation of an insidious, because merely superficially 'anarchic', poetics. When approached in this way even the experimentalism of *The Cantos* contributes to 'a fascist poem' because it is 'a poem whose real meaning cannot be grasped without reference to its fascism', and Pound's radically 'open' and eclectic texts are seen to produce the desire for a deeper historical 'closure' which much of high modernism promotes.<sup>8</sup> Such approaches to

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6. 'National Culture: A Manifesto 1938', in *Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965*, edited by William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp. 131-36, p. 133.

7. The first phrase is taken from Alan Durant's *Ezra Pound, Identity in Crisis: A Fundamental Reassessment of the Poet and his Work* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 5; the second from Paul Smith's *Pound Revised* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 18. Both of these studies use psychoanalytic theory in order to approach Pound's writing in terms of controlling 'economies' of clarity and natural practices which are opposed to supposed 'excesses' and perversions; for a concise description of such economies according to Freudian criteria see Peter Makin's *Provence and Pound* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 29-35.

8. The first phrase is taken from one of the most encyclopaedic of such approaches, Robert Casillo's *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 154; on the tension between the 'open' modernist poetic text and the latent ideology of closure see Cairns Craig, *Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry* (Pittsburgh and London: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 71 and p. 154.



Pound's programme must invert assessments which acclaim his postmodern qualities, for his *avant-garde* endeavour to introduce 'alien territory' into literature becomes merely an attempt to master or 'totalise' cultural discourses by expanding the ambit and authority of the literary.

There is little common ground between the extremes of such criticism, and Pound the authoritarian *ego scriptor* and Pound the postmodern 'contemporary of our grandchildren' seldom converge.<sup>9</sup> However, such polarisation should not in itself be surprising, for, as has often been stated, contradictions between radical form and reactionary ideological content are a characteristic of modernism, and studies which have considered it as a historical phenomenon which was, from its inception, driven by contradictory currents and dualities, have often provided the most effective routes into its politics and aesthetics.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Pound would invite such an 'ambivalent' approach to his project when he configured art as 'a departure from fixed positions' which nonetheless authoritatively contained this departure, for 'Any work of art is a compound of freedom and order'.<sup>11</sup> Critical ambivalence or polarisation might then be seen as both an effect of contradictions in Pound's project and the result of a necessary distinction between 'Pound the poet' and 'Pound the political economist', for differences in emphasis can discover in his work either a 'textual anarchy' which pronounces him 'the author of the modern literary era', or a conservatism which configures him as 'the authoritarian traditionalist' of a particularly reactionary phase of recent cultural history.<sup>12</sup>

What is seldom considered, however, is that the presence of contradictions and tensions within Pound's project and its evaluation might spotlight both a feature and a *legacy* of modernism. This legacy could be regarded as that which gives rise to the contradictions in critical thinking as it confronts modernism's 'aesthetic' treatment of the concept of authority. As well as producing

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9. The inscription of a controlling *ego scriptor* occurs several times in *The Cantos* (p. 112, p. 350, p. 360, p. 458); the last phrase alludes to Marjorie Perloff's essay 'The Contemporary of our Grandchildren: Pound's Influence' (in *Ezra Pound Among the Poets*, edited by George Bornstein [Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1985], pp. 195-229) which typically stresses his radical textual legacy.

10. Despite its insistence upon *developing* contradictions, Michael H. Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) offers an analysis of such tensions within a modernism which was 'individualist before it was anti-individualist, anti-traditional before it was traditional, inclined to anarchism before it was inclined to authoritarianism' (p. 79). The existence of more 'synchronic' contradictions in the politics of modernism has recently been restated by Steven Connor in *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford and Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), p. 104.

11. Pound cited by T. S. Eliot in the 1917 essay 'Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry', reprinted in Eliot's *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 162-82, pp. 171-2.

12. The first two phrases are taken from Andrew Parker's discussion of Pound's ambiguous critical status in 'Ezra Pound and the "Economy" of Anti-Semitism', in *Postmodernism and Politics*, edited by Jonathan Arac (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 70-90, p. 70; the rest are drawn from a similar discussion which opens Kathryn V. Lindberg's 'A Battle of Puns and the Extra Pound: Joyce and Pound over Shakespeare's Authorizing "Will"', in *Boundary 2*, 18 (Spring, 1991), pp. 157-73, p. 158.



contradictions in modernism, the ambivalent status of authority within it continues to destabilise the criteria which critical thinking has advanced in order to assess it.

This can be seen in the contradictory movements of Poundian criticism itself. It can be illustrated more substantially by charting the way that Pound's modernism forces specific critical criteria to open themselves to conflicting interpretations, and Walter Benjamin's pronouncement that 'The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life' can be taken as an influential example.<sup>13</sup>

If Pound's programme is taken as an authoritarian or 'totalitarian' attempt to reconcile a matrix of economic, social and political contradictions within the realm of art, then such a monumental conflation of categories and terms, or of basic and 'superstructural' elements, suggests a confusion of criteria which confirms Benjamin's thesis. In view of his fascism, criticism has often had recourse to Benjamin's phrase as an appropriate and incisive move in any analysis of the politics of Pound's writing.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Pound's own programme would consistently endorse such a 'conflation', for he had laid down a basic principle of his project when suggesting in 1912 that he wished to recover a 'vital' art which might annul 'the "divorce of art and life"' which 'we see about us'.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, his project often overtly displays the conceptual violence and 'totalism' of an 'aestheticisation' of the political - as can be seen in this description of the state, for example, which elides the social contradictions and tensions which politics has traditionally arbitrated by using figurative language to impose harmony upon a diverse polity:

A thousand candles together blaze with intense brightness. No one candle's light damages another's. So is the liberty of the individual in the ideal and fascist state.<sup>16</sup>

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13. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 217-251, p. 241.

14. Most recently in the discussion of the politics of modernist poetry that opens Michael North's *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. vii. Casillo claims in *The Genealogy of Demons* that 'Few writers confirm more strikingly than Pound does Walter Benjamin's observation that fascism aestheticises politics' (p. 110), but despite the fact that Benjamin's 'observation' is frequently alluded to in Pound criticism extended discussion of its relevance to his programme is rare. One notable exception to this occurs in Martin A. Kayman's *The Modernism of Ezra Pound: The Science of Poetry* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 26-8.

15. *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 87. These phrases are actually part of an early essay, 'Psychology and Troubadours', which would eventually be incorporated into later editions of this study. Although Pound dates this essay to 1916 it was actually written as early as 1912 (see Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989], p. 97).

16. 'A Visiting Card', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 276-305, p. 276. Martin Jay provides a concise formulation of the aestheticisation of politics when he considers it as a 'violence' which is 'directed against all the cultural impulses, especially those in language, which resist coerced totalization and closure' (see "'The Aesthetic Ideology' as Ideology: Or What Does it Mean to Aestheticize Politics?", in *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* [New York and London: Routledge, 1993], pp. 71-83, p. 76).

Here the tangled roots of Pound's simultaneously *avant-garde* and authoritarian aesthetics seem to be exposed, for in his work the aesthetic assumes the authority of the political in order to coercively 'harmonise' or 'totalise' its ruptures. However, other factors can be brought into play which suggest that such approaches to Pound 'explain' the authoritarianism of his aesthetics, and usher the phenomenon of both modernism and fascism into the recesses of past history, only as they gloss over the complexity of his writings' historical context. An insight into this complexity can be gained from Pound's terminology when expounding on the political vision of Thomas Jefferson, whose anti-capitalist agrarianism he enthusiastically endorsed:

Jefferson... had the totalitarian view, seeing forces not in isolation but as interactive... he knew that a currency unburdened by usury was essential for a real democracy. This was part of Jefferson's totalitarian view; it proves his link with the Mediterranean mind.<sup>17</sup>

Here Pound's traditionalism (the classicist valorisation of the 'Mediterranean mind') and his political 'totalitarianism' come together starkly. If this passage is granted its historical specificity, however, clear political evaluation of its content begins to waver. This can be seen in his use of the term 'totalitarian' itself, for, as commentaries which insist upon the 'ambivalence' of the impulses within fascism stress, for Pound and many other modern thinkers it had been capitalism which held a monopoly of the anti-democratic and 'totalising' impulses in history. Judgements made upon Pound's espousal of the 'totalitarian' might then be qualified by the acknowledgement of its oppositional relation to the hegemonic authority of capital. Thus, when Pound writes that 'We find two forces in history: one that divides, shatters, and kills, and one that contemplates the unity of the mystery' ('A Visiting Card', p. 276), it is only by valorising the ideals of liberal capitalism that the unity that he desires can be pronounced absolutely authoritarian or intrinsically 'closed'.<sup>18</sup>

The term 'interaction' is equally ambivalent and far-reaching in its implications, for it suggests both a 'totalising' impulse and a force whose movements work to render orthodox categories and distinctions interactive or inactive. On the political plane such 'interaction' could be seen to manifest itself as an indeterminacy of direction which Pound's support for fascism encapsulates well, for Italian fascism

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17. Pound writing in 1937, cited in Matthew Little's 'Pound's Use of the Word *Totalitarian*', *Paideuma* 11 (1982), pp. 147-56, p. 154.

18. Andrew Hewitt makes this point in his study *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1993) when he claims that 'advanced capitalism does not need fascism to "harmonize" it; it is itself already a coercive principle of harmonisation' (p. 136). The point at stake here is that there is a definite if misguided integrity to Pound's political thinking, an integrity which would be displayed, for instance, in the defence he made of his treasonable Rome Radio wartime broadcasts when he insisted that 'I have not spoken with regard to *this* war, but in protest against a system which creates one war after another, in series and system' (from a letter to the American Attorney General in 1943, cited in Humphrey Carpenter's *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1988], p. 624).



can be considered, as has recently been argued, not merely as a species of authoritarianism but as a 'scandalously' heterogeneous 'interaction' of utopian left and right-wing political impulses.<sup>19</sup>

Such considerations suggest the need for an *acceptance* of contradiction and complexity in the approach to the politics of Pound's modernism. But if the term 'interaction' invokes not the authority of discourses but crises in their integrity, then it must be acknowledged that for Pound it is aesthetics which carry the burden of this 'de-authorising' function, for in approaching the aesthetic, Pound would declare, 'You deal with an interactive force'.<sup>20</sup>

That the 'interaction' of aesthetics with other disciplines and discourses has provided a major, and primarily subversive force in critical thinking since modernism, is evident.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the urge to conflate the categories of art and life has been regarded as the supreme disruption of discourse as it was expressed in the 'progressive' project of the modernist *avant-garde*, and the dismantling of the institutional specificity of art in order to achieve its integration with the social or 'lived' a defining characteristic of modernism.<sup>22</sup> Such considerations invoke other aspects of critical thought and literary theory since modernism which have emphasised the subversive legacy of aesthetics as an intervening force in the syntax of discourse. In the face of crises in dominant systems art has been seen to carry 'the mark of freedom' from their authority, and aesthetics have come to make 'of what is known as "literature" something other than knowledge', by existing as 'the very place where the social code is destroyed and renewed'.<sup>23</sup>

What an idea of aesthetics as an interactive force suggests, then, is the viability of a revised or reversed reading of the 'aestheticisation of politics' in which the phrase indicates not a reactionary conflation of categories, but the fact of the modern crisis or *demise* of what were once authoritative

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19. Although he does not treat Pound in his study, Hewitt's remarks on (Italian) fascism are particularly relevant to this point: 'Fascism eludes classification. It disorients political analysis in the confusion between left and right, refuses to point the way forward by conflating progress and reaction. Fascism was and is a scandal, both historically and theoretically' (*Fascist Modernism*, p. 68); see also Tim Redman's recent analysis of Pound's fascism as a meeting of left and right-wing political thinking in *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially chapter 8.

20. 'Cavalcanti', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 149-200, p. 152.

21. David Carroll, for instance, stresses this point throughout his *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (New York and London: Routledge, 1987).

22. Such ideas form the basis of studies such as Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

23. The first quoted phrase is taken from Theodor Adorno's 'Letters to Walter Benjamin', in which he qualifies the thesis that all 'aestheticisation' is of a regressive nature - Adorno would insist that the 'autonomy' of the modern artwork (its divorce from traditional discursive control) contained 'the mark of freedom' as well as the threat of ideological reaction (see 'Letters To Walter Benjamin', in *Aesthetics and Politics: The Key Texts of the Classic Debate Within German Marxism*, translations edited by Ronald Taylor [London and New York: Verso, 1980], pp. 110-133, p. 121); the second is from the work of Julia Kristeva as cited by Astradur Eysteinnsson in his discussion of some of these theoretical positions in chapter 5 of *The Concept of Modernism*, p. 235.



distinctions and boundaries between discourses - discrete systems being contaminated, or rendered interactive by the 'force' of the aesthetic. Pound's utilisation of such a demise can be seen both in the conflation of left and right-wing thought that features in his political thinking and the 'scandalous' mix of anarchism and authoritarianism which underwrites his poetics. Approached from this position, Pound's aestheticisation of the political describes the shape of a reactionary or authoritarian aesthetics only at the same time that it configures an *avant-garde* intervention in crises in the authority and integrity of inherited discourses and their organisation.

Such factors continue to complicate the approach to Pound and suggest that any 'final' assessment of his project remains elusive because contradictions within his writing and its contexts continue to overspill or problematise evaluation. However, as the 'reversibility' of the influential idea of the aestheticisation of the political shows, it can be proposed that Pound's work remains scandalous and multiform because it straddles an impasse within critical thinking itself upon the relationship between modern aesthetics, authority and authoritarianism.

What such considerations suggest in turn is that the ambivalence of Pound's modernism might be located not in the particular political direction of his work, but in an antagonism between aesthetics and authority which his project exploits. What must be acknowledged is that in the interaction between Pound's apparently authoritarian politics and anarchic poetics a consistent assault upon the concept of authority itself takes place, and the complexities generated by this assault compound his work's extreme political ambivalence. In order to explore such ideas the initial chapters of this study will not concentrate upon the 'anarchism' of Pound's poetics or the 'economies' of his language, but upon an antipathy to authority which gives a double-edge to the authoritarianism of his declared aesthetic programme.

## **Pound and Aestheticisation**

If the idea of aestheticisation inhabits an ambiguous position in modernism and in subsequent critical thinking, Pound's exploitation of the concept and its role in contemporary theory can be traced by considering other tensions in Benjamin's thesis.

For Benjamin 'aestheticisation' would denote, in one of its aspects, the reactionary sense of tradition which the 'aura' of the canonised (original and authentic) work of art could generate within culture by virtue of its charismatic *remove* from modern life and methods of production. Benjamin saw in the



emergent technologies of photography and the cinema the promise of a populist challenge to, and a rational emancipation from, what had become a 'theology of art' ('The Work of Art', p. 224). The new technologies, translated into aesthetic practice and effects, could shatter 'the uniqueness of every reality' by insisting upon the possibility of 'its reproduction' (p. 223).

Mass reproduction could jeopardise the claims to originality and 'substantive duration' (p. 221) upon which the historical authenticity of the unique artwork depended, and overcome 'the unique phenomenon of a distance' (p. 222) which held between artwork and audience. Thus it would 'brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery' (p. 218) by destroying the 'auratic' associations of ritual, religious worship and the cult of beauty which had idealised art's history and function. What such a technology would actually accomplish is the disengagement of the auratic artwork from the 'domain of tradition' through the depreciation of 'the quality of its presence', and so launch an assault upon authority itself; for 'what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object' (p. 221).

In many ways, Benjamin's thesis on reproduction can be regarded as a rehearsal of ideas that have been readdressed by contemporary critical theory, and the work of Jacques Derrida can be taken as a case in point. Benjamin's notion of the (always inauthentic, never unique) copy can be laid alongside Derrida's promotion of the 'supplement' as a concept which, while being traditionally perceived to denote that which can be merely 'added' to an original, concurrently and subversively acts as the principle which threatens to substitute for or 'supplant' it.<sup>24</sup> Thus the supplement in Derrida, like the principle of reproducibility in Benjamin, works to unmask an ideology of authentic or natural origins by problematising the binary hierarchy which produces the privileged and authoritative object or term.

The accord between these two thinkers can be extended. The function of the supplement is intimately related to the idea of *différance* in Derrida's work, which is in turn derived from a Saussurean model of linguistics positing language as a system of differences 'devoid of 'positive' terms. Viewing discourse as a structure in which meaning and value are generated by processes of difference and deferral, Derrida argues that *différance*, or the differentiating and deferring movements of signification in any linguistic or conceptual system, must be acknowledged as the process which

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24. This is treated at length in Derrida's reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* (translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976]) where an idea of writing as a mere supplement to a natural and originary speech is presented 'as if evil *supervened upon* a good origin' (p. 199).

comprises the 'production of the intervals without which the "full" terms would not signify'.<sup>25</sup> Having identified the interplay of absence and presence, origin and supplement, as the disturbingly shifting base of any authoritative system, *différance* functions to expose the supposed fulness of any single term (as it underpins notions of truth, reference, immediacy, priority) as the site of a repression of structural indeterminacy, or, in Derridean terms, an assertion of a metaphysics of 'presence'.

Although the body of Benjamin's essay is taken up with an assault upon ideas of origin and duration as they contribute to the authoritarian 'processing of data in the Fascist sense' ('The Work of Art', p. 218), his celebrated formulation of the aestheticisation of politics occurs in a concluding discussion of Filippo Marinetti's Futurist poetics, and turns upon a conception of 'presence' which Derrida's ideas help clarify.

Here the rise of fascism is configured as the degenerative self-alienation of humanity into the object of its own contemplation, for in the 'aestheticisation' of war that Benjamin perceived in Marinetti he saw that humanity could now 'experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order' (p. 242). At the same time that the aesthetic apparatus generates 'ritual values' (p. 241) it also, in its fascist guise, degrades suffering to the status of a spectacle by eliding the difference between the reality of human destruction and 'aesthetic pleasure'. Thus, in a fascist aesthetics, the 'quality' of the 'presence' of the aesthetic aura is not depreciated, but escalated and assimilated as a transforming power 'present' in perception itself.

As Benjamin acknowledges, he does no more here than repeat the strictures of Marinetti's own manifestos, which announce 'the complete renewal of human sensibility' within a modernity for which 'Time and space died yesterday'.<sup>26</sup> It is against the irrational degeneration of culture which such an aesthetic of 'presence' threatens that the final sentences of Benjamin's essay launch their claim that 'This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art' (p. 242).

As has already been suggested, there is a disturbing reversibility in such distinctions between a progressive and reactionary aesthetics. This is apparent in the fact that the introduction of an aesthetic dimension into the immediacy of perception itself actually seems to be what most radically jeopardises 'the historical testimony', 'substantive duration' and cumulative authority of the auratic aesthetic. It is,

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25. Derrida, 'Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva', in *Positions*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp. 17-36, pp. 26-7.

26. Marinetti cited in Randall Stevenson's *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 9-10.



Benjamin's argument discovers, in the undifferentiation of the aesthetic and the lived that the authority of art's 'domain of tradition', or its appropriation of specific vistas of 'time and space', vanishes or is 'forgotten' in pure presence.<sup>27</sup> Such a vanishing would be configured later by another Marxist thinker, Herbert Marcuse, as 'the idea of the *end of art*' which a society freed from alienation might realise: 'The images (*Schein*) of the beautiful and of fulfilment would vanish when they are no longer denied... the images become aspects of the real'.<sup>28</sup>

In Pound's conception of an 'interactive' aesthetics such a 'forgetting' of authority, and elision of the difference between art and the 'real', would play a major role. It is implicit in the refusal of categorical differences which motivates his early desire to annul 'the "divorce of art and life"'. It would emerge later as the idea of an affirmative or 'vital' knowing in which the difference between the 'lived' and the artwork or 'book' could be 'creatively' forgotten or radically internalised, as culture could only commence for Pound by means of a 'knowing' which was 'in people, "in the air"' - 'Knowledge is NOT culture. The domain of culture begins when one HAS "forgotten what book"'.<sup>29</sup> More specifically, Pound's project would push Benjamin's assault upon the notion of authority to its limits by inverting the traditional thesis that power, to be effective and constructive, must be rationalised, countered and transmitted by authority. Rather than striving for authority, the *disappearance* of it - synonymous with the disappearance of the difference between art and the 'vital' - would announce a radical emancipation and empowerment. This is precisely what Pound intimates when configuring an ideal act of reading (utilising, as in his description of the state, a metaphor of light) as an unmediated experience: 'Properly, we shd. read for power. Man reading shd. be man intensely alive. The book shd. be a ball of light in one's hand' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 55).

That the total aestheticisation of experience described a potentially fascist aesthetics *and* suggested a condition in which 'life' was most radically liberated from the burden of authority was not overlooked by Benjamin. Indeed, it would be this recognition, bolstered by an awareness that his progressive vision of the mass-media was inordinately optimistic, that would later lead him to formulate a politicised aesthetics which would take not the authority but the schismatic forces and pressures of modern capitalism as their main adversary (as Pound would configure them, forces which 'divide

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27. Alexander García Düttmann discusses such a 'forgetting' of tradition in 'Tradition and Destruction: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Language', in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, edited by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 32-58, p. 47.

28. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, translated by Herbert Marcuse and Erica Sherover (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 27-8.

29. *Guide To Kulchur*, p. 58, p. 57, and p. 134.

shatter and kill'). Confronted by the 'atrophy of experience' within such conditions, Benjamin would come to accredit the necessarily authoritative, 'auratic' or 'associative' properties of the *avant-garde* artwork with a desired ability to *preserve* a sense of history, identity and tradition against such factors.<sup>30</sup> The compromise that Benjamin reached would promote an aesthetics of the 'fragment' and 'adopt the montage principle in history; that means to erect the large constructions from the smallest, precisely and pointedly manufactured units'.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, Benjamin would insist that the utopian delivery from authority which aestheticisation promised was dangerously apolitical; an aesthetics of 'montage' or 'manufacture' which intervened in and restructured history, however, violated narratives of authority by subjecting history to art.

In both the 'end of art' and the aesthetic 'manufacturing' of history, then, Benjamin's thinking discovers ways in which aestheticisation can radically challenge authority. While Benjamin necessarily shuns the former in favour of an interventionist aesthetics, however, Pound would utilise both, for the subversive 'montage principle in history' is precisely what had given rise, years previously, to Pound's own intertextual poetics of the fragment and the quotation.

Because Pound considered modernity to be experiencing a crisis in its values to the extent that 'all that is left is exiled, driven in catacombs, exists in the isolated individual', he would go to marginalised features or the 'light from the borders' of history in order to assemble his own map or 'montage' of tradition.<sup>32</sup> Such an approach, as in Benjamin, would constitute an affront to the authoritative and 'augmentative' logic of chronological sequence and historical process, and *The Spirit of Romance* would announce this as a specifically aesthetic provocation in its opening declaration that 'All ages are contemporaneous... This is especially true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent' (p. 8). For Pound, such a 'time' would comprise not only a subversion of chronology but the restitution of a prior continuum from which modernity had become disengaged:

How our modernity,  
Nerve-wracked and broken, turns

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30. The quoted phrases are taken from Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, pp. 155-200, p. 159 and p. 186. For an overview of the inconsistencies that emerged in Benjamin's conception of the auratic artwork see Eugene Lunin's *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 151-4 and pp. 251-6. Marcuse too would recognise that 'the end of art' was both utopian and dangerous; following an identical logic to Benjamin he would write of Auschwitz that 'If even this memory were to be silenced, then the "end of art" would indeed have come' (*The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp. 55-6).

31. Benjamin cited in Helga Geyer-Ryan's 'Counterfactual Artefacts: Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History', in *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Edward Timms and Peter Collier (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 66-79, p. 67.

32. Quotations are taken from *Letters*, p. 181, and *The Cantos*, p. 622.



Against time's way and all the way of things...<sup>33</sup>

What *The Spirit of Romance* would go on to anthologise were aspects of an 'outlaw' Romance tradition which Pound considered to reinstate 'time's way'.<sup>34</sup> The discontinuous movements of his later poetry would not only re-circulate fragments of such traditions, but would translate the fact of their historical interruption into principles of discontinuity which now infiltrated and drew into crisis the 'mono-linear logic' of narratives of history and cultural value. Utilising the breaches that such crises opened, Poundian poetics had access to fields whose now destabilised or 'spatialised' syntax and grammar was amenable to aesthetic organisation through 'subject' and 'culture-rhymes' - subversive patternings which would pervade his poetry and purport to allow certain repressed continuities to re-emerge.<sup>35</sup>

For Pound 'the poet cuts his design in TIME' (*ABC of Reading*, p. 199) quite literally by such strategies, and subverts the logic and history of authority. Although he would excavate the classical roots and pre-histories of chosen civilisations for elements of such a montage of culture and tradition, it would be the 'outlaw' impulses of art within such cultures or their antipathy to Western forms of thinking which he isolated. As in Benjamin, a tradition which *was itself* inimical to authority could thus take shape, one which would perform a problematisation of the notion of authority from within the scope of its own terms.

However, the subversive function of Pound's 'aesthetic' restructuring of history would not resist the conflation of art and the real but move towards it. It would do so, however, in a way that exploited an antagonism between aesthetics and authority which critical theory would articulate fully only later. This antagonism resides in the opposition between aesthetics, or aesthetic principles, and authority as it has consolidated the form and order of Western thought. At what is perceived as the inception of this order, art constituted the derogated 'other' of the sovereignty of rational authority in Plato's *Republic* by existing as the unauthorised 'copy' of the real in an idealist hierarchy. It is as a deconstruction of

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33. 'Und Drang', in *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, edited by Michael J. King (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 169-70.

34. Pound would often align himself and selected co-modernists with the 'outcasts' of history, claiming that 'All our work was the work of outlaws' (*Gaudier-Brzeska, A Memoir* [New York: New Directions, 1970], p. 141).

35. I take the phrase 'mono-linear logic' from an essay Pound published in *Criterion* in 1930: 'We no longer think or need to think in terms of mono-linear logic, the sentence structure, subject, predicate object etc. We are as capable or almost as capable as the biologist of thinking thoughts that join like spokes in a wheel-hub, and that fuse in hyper-geometric amalgams' (reprinted in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, edited by Harriet Zinnes [New York: New Directions, 1980], p. 166). The idea of approaching Pound's work as a patterning of subject and culture-rhymes was promoted by Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 92; for an influential early reading of modern literature's tendency towards discontinuous forms and a resultant 'spatialisation' of reference see Joseph Frank's 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (Bloomington Ind. and London: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 3-62.

facets of this hierarchy that Derrida's project can be broadly conceived,<sup>36</sup> just as the eruption of the aesthetic from its position as the mere 'supplement' of the rational describes the subversive function of modern art for other theorists of the *avant-garde*. Pound anticipated such ideas when he returned to the Platonic roots of Western thinking in order to demand the return of aesthetics as an archaic and 'outlawed' ordering principle which the history of civilisation since *The Republic* had, by definition, repressed and excluded:

Plato said that artists ought to be kept out of the ideal republic, and the artists swore by their gods that nothing would drag them into it. That is the history of 'civilization', or philology, or Kultur.<sup>37</sup>

Pound would consider the 'history of "civilization"' as an apparatus that aesthetics could now explode, and it would be the demise of this Platonic opposition which would signal the advent of 'a new civilization' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 58). 'The sick part of our philosophy', Pound would insist, 'is "Greek splitting"',<sup>38</sup> and the interaction of modern aesthetics with other discourses could be taken as the sign of the crisis of this inheritance, while aesthetics themselves, as a cultural category which had historically been denied the authoritative grounding of legitimate systems, could escape both authority's control and decay. 'Poetry', Pound would claim, 'is identical with the other arts in this main purpose, that is, of liberation',<sup>39</sup> while the subversive charge that it contained also enshrined an order that 'The arts alone' could 'transmit':

The order does not end in the arts,  
The order shall come and pass through them.

The state is too idle, the decrepit church is too idle,  
The arts alone can transmit this.  
They alone cling fast to the gods,  
Even the sciences are a little below them...  
They are after you and before you.<sup>40</sup>

What asserts itself here is the fact that for Pound the order which art could transmit existed not as an appropriation of authority but as an *alternative* to it. This can be seen if an earlier quotation is expanded: 'The sick part of our philosophy is "Greek splitting"... The Confucian is totalitarian'. In stepping outside Western experience for his model of the totalitarian in this instance Pound is presenting a culture in which authority once took an 'interactive' form. In canto XIII this would emerge as an 'order' defined by a social internalisation of power which appears to give rise to orthodox

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36. See for instance Christopher Norris' discussion of this point in *Derrida* (London: Fontana Press, 1987), pp. 60-61.

37. 'Arnold Dolmetsch', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 431-436, p. 432.

38. 'Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 95-111, p. 99.

39. 'The Wisdom of Poetry', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 329-332, p. 330.

40. 'From Chebar', in *Collected Early Poems*, p. 271.



legitimacy. However, this 'order' is accompanied by a Confucian refusal of any authority which transcends, or is extrinsic to, the human or 'vital' (as will be shown later, it is a specifically de-authorised version of 'the gods' which the arts 'alone cling fast to' for Pound, and Kung 'said nothing of the "life after death"'). More significantly, it is prefaced by a Confucian insistence upon the inclusion of the artist in any viable paradigm of the political or social whole:

And "When the prince has gathered about him  
"All the savants and artists, his riches will be fully  
employed."  
And Kung said, and wrote on the bo leaves:  
If a man have not order within him  
He cannot spread order about him;  
And if a man have not order within him  
His family will not act with due order;  
And if the prince have not order within him  
He cannot put order in his dominions.  
And Kung gave the words "order"  
and "brotherly deference"  
And said nothing of the "life after death." (Cantos, p. 59)

Totalitarian 'order', for Pound, is defined as the negation of an authoritarian imposition, for, like 'Kulchur' (as distinct from an elitist *Kultur*) which is 'NOT knowledge' and exists 'in people, "in the air"', Confucian order 'consists in establishing order within oneself' and generates an 'order or harmony' which 'spreads by a sort of contagion without specific effort'.<sup>41</sup> Although Pound obscures the precise nature of such an order this is essentially the point: a difference between an, oriental, feudal and aesthetically 'total' order and a Western 'authority' sickened by 'splitting' is suggested, and the 'unknowability' of the cohesion of the former is, perversely, the proof of its virtue.

Kung's definition of order occurs, of course, in the radically manufactured context of history as *The Cantos* present it. The subversive or de-authorising function of both the form and content of such 'montaged' elements can be appreciated if the nature of the patternings which Pound's method hoped to give rise to are considered, for they would come to comprise what Pound announced as a *paideuma* of history and culture:

The term Paideuma has been resurrected in our time because of a need... The term has been given the sense of the active element in the era, the complex of ideas which is in a given time germinal, reaching into the next epoch... the paideuma makes history.<sup>42</sup>

Pound would borrow the term *paideuma* from a contemporary, the anthropologist Leo Frobenius, who had, as Pound read him, discovered a morphology of primitive cultures drawn from folklore and artefacts which revealed archaic inter-cultural crossovers and recurrences. This had 'major

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41. 'Prolegomena', in *Selected Prose*, p. 186.

42. 'For a New Paideuma', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 254-9, p. 254.

implications in the unconscious' for Pound, as such patternings attested to archetypal cultural designs. The stress that such a morphology placed upon the existence of a general cultural 'unconscious' did not, however, 'limit' culture by defining it merely as an unconscious possession for him. The very emergence of its patterns under 'active' modern scrutiny suggested that 'the conscious *individual*' could have an 'effect in shaping the *paideuma*, or at least the next *paideuma*',<sup>43</sup> and his own practices would modify the methods of Frobenius by starting 'from where Frobenius left off', for while the anthropologist's 'Morphology was applied to savages' Pound's artistic 'interest' was 'in civilizations at their *most*' (*Letters*, p. 336).

Pound would use the 'new' *paideuma* in an essentially active and projective sense: 'in the new *paideuma* I am not including the monumental, the retrospect, but only the pro-spect' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 96). Like his ideal of 'order' this cultural and historical pattern which was 'NOT knowledge' could be both 'recovered' from pre-history and 'made' in the present because it was an assembly whose nature was inflected through the category, and the counter-tradition, of art. This fact lay exposed in the term *paideuma* itself, for its etymology derives not only from the Greek conception of culture or *paideia*, but from the Platonic distinction between *paideia* and *paidia*, which signified sophistry as well as poetic 'making', 'play' or *poeisis*.<sup>44</sup>

The idea of 'play' as an anarchic and de-authorising factor in any system of discourse has been used extensively in recent critical theory. Again it is expressed concisely in Derrida's work as the 'play' of *différance* in which 'Play is always play of absence and presence'. However, as Derrida acknowledges, 'if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence'.<sup>45</sup> This thinking *before* difference is precisely what Pound desires to accomplish by recovering an 'order', an alternative 'knowing', and a morphology of culture in which 'Greek splitting' is minimised. However, while for Derrida it is the critical advantages of conceiving such a condition which are of value (knowledge being able to situate itself as a 'difference from non-difference'), it is exactly the *recovery* of such an undifferentiated condition of thought and culture that Pound conjures with in his assault upon the Platonic derogation of art. The actual 'scandal' of Pound's methodology can thus be posed as the promotion of a generally outlawed 'order' which remains resistant to clear

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43. 'For a New *Paideuma*', p. 254; in *Gaudier-Brzeska* Pound had insisted that 'Will and consciousness are our VORTEX' (see p. 24 and p. 110).

44. For this etymology of *paideuma* see Kathryn V. Lindberg's *Reading Pound Reading: Modernism After Nietzsche* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 179.

45. Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 278-93, p. 292.



charges of authoritarianism or totalisation because, in proposing the interaction of an outlawed aesthetics with any formulation of authority, it attempts to renegotiate the terms of authority itself - 'The tradition', Pound insists, 'is a beauty which we preserve and not a set of fetters to bind us'.<sup>46</sup>

In Pound's refusal of the Platonic distinction which gives rise to traditional authority another accord with Benjamin emerges. As their respective programmes came to gravitate around an 'aesthetic' or non-linear sense of history, both would indict Marinetti's poetics for their ahistorical and 'aestheticist' sensualism. 'Futurism', Pound wrote in 1914, is an 'accelerated impressionism', or a primarily 'passive' or 'receptive' art (an 'impression' being something that is passively 'received'). If Pound was concerned with a 'vital' art then Futurism's voyeuristic concern with the 'spectacle' of the present as it celebrated the technology of the machine, and its 'curious tic for destroying past glories' remained blinkered, existing in his opinion merely as 'propaganda that could get along by itself without any painting [or poetry] whatever'.<sup>47</sup> The sensualism and anti-historical passivity that aestheticise and legitimise the spectacle of destruction for Benjamin, then, are qualities that are also condemned by Pound - through the 'failed' artist that is presented in the latter half of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* for instance, whose inability to see in his artistic practice any historical significance or any 'relation to the state' renders him 'A consciousness disjunct' and a drifting 'hedonist'.<sup>48</sup>

For both Pound and Benjamin, a revolutionary conception of 'aestheticisation' would *negate* any formulation of it as an inert relation to the world as a spectacle. It is precisely this passive voyeurism which clarifies Benjamin's definition of a fascist aesthetics, and perhaps *the* axiom of Pound's programme inheres in his insistence that art comprises a mode of understanding, politicisation and action. 'The work of art', Pound writes in *Guide To Kulchur*, 'is a door or a lift permitting a man to enter, or hoisting him mentally into, a zone of activity, and out of fogg and inertia' (p. 190).

An indication of the form that such action takes in his thinking is encountered later in this work as an indictment of the system and method of Aristotle, whom Pound presents as 'Master of those that cut apart, dissect and divide. Competent precursor of the card-index. But without the organic sense.' (p. 343). Aristotle's relevance in this context lies in his definition of art, or *techne*, as that which, having

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46. 'The Tradition', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 91-3, p. 91.

47. The first quotations are taken from *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 82 and p. 90; the final one is cited in Carpenter's *A Serious Character*, p. 248. Even in 1944, when Pound was feeling more sympathetic towards (the recently dead) Marinetti's brand of Futurism, he would invoke his ghost in the 'Italian' Cantos only to have it admit that "In many matters I followed empty vanity, / I loved show more than wisdom / Nor did I know the ancient sages nor ever read / A word of Confucius..." (see Massimo Bacigalupo's 'Ezra Pound's Cantos 72 and 73: An Annotated Translation', in *Paideuma*, 20, 1 & 2 [1991], pp. 9-19, p. 10).

48. *Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 201 and p. 203.

the power to 'bring into being' something which otherwise would not have had existence, is considered to operate in the same sphere as chance. Aristotle proceeds to define rational and practical action, or *praxis*, as that which comes to be '*of necessity*', manipulating the ungrounded category of art, as does Plato in *The Republic*, into a derogated and negatively defining position.<sup>49</sup>

Pound's 'interactive' and 'manufactured' aesthetics would refuse exactly this opposition. While for Plato and Aristotle art took the position of creativity without authoritative grounding, or an act of artifice, Pound's programme was predicated upon an idea of aesthetics as an active or *interactive* overcoming of the difference between representation and action. According to Poundian criteria, art as representation would be superseded by its internalisation as a radical 'making' or *production*; thus, from an early stage in his career, the 'aestheticised' subject would be configured as both the receiver and director of a 'fluid force':

There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man: firstly you may think of him as that toward which perception moves, as the toy of circumstance, as the plastic substance *receiving* impressions; secondly, you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as *conceiving* instead of merely reflecting and observing.<sup>50</sup>

Here the subject is a nexus, or an interactive site of relations of reception and production. Pound's poetics would continue to erode distinctions between art and the 'vital' by promoting an indeterminacy or 'fluidity' between the creative act and its audience. To this end his developing doctrines would problematise the exact direction and source of aesthetic 'power' through such formulae as the 'VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing', and the 'Image' which 'presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' for artist and audience alike, granting to both a 'sense of sudden liberation... which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art'.<sup>51</sup>

Pound's basic refusal of a differentiation between art and *praxis*, or aesthetics and 'necessity', can be considered as an 'irrational' regression in thought. In contemporary theoretical terms, his desire for a condition in which aesthetics proclaim a total coincidence and immediacy in the relation between 'art and life' announces a 'metaphysics of presence', or a denial of difference as a fundamental feature of

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49. See *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J. A. K. Thomson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 208; for a related account of the role of Aristotle's notion of *praxis* in Pound's thinking see Jean-Michel Rabaté's *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's 'Cantos'* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 253-7.

50. *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 89. The centrality of an 'active' conception of subjectivity to Pound's polemic programme is indicated by the appearance of this passage, in slightly altered form (in large type with many capitalisations and emphases) as the manifesto 'Vortex. Pound' in *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex 1 & 2* (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), p. 153.

51. Quotations are taken from *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 92, and 'A Retrospect', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 3-14, , p 4.



cultural experience and critical activity. At the same time, however, it describes the radical refusal of hierarchised thinking in which art and aesthetics are forever the demoted other or mere 'supplement' of, the real. Here is the critical impasse that Pound's work straddles, for its totalitarian 'conflation' of categories also anticipates a trend in thinking in which modern art presents the disruptive return of aesthetics as a suppressed category which now interacts with and destabilises all categories. What is characteristic of Pound's modernism, however, is that the subversive forces within such a project are themselves adduced as alternatives to authority - the de-authorising movement is halted, as it were, and the derogated term elevated to a position of power.

Such an 'empowered' condition is what Pound advances through his refusal of a mimetic conception of art, and his insistence that in its very emancipation from representation art becomes 'vital', for 'The spirit of the arts is dynamic. The arts are not passive, nor static, nor... are they reflective'.<sup>52</sup> *The Spirit of Romance* would reinforce this idea through a discussion of the work of the sixteenth century Portuguese writer Luis de Camoëns. Here Pound would outline the events that befell Ignez da Castro, the subject of one of Camoëns' poems and a queen's maid who was loved by and secretly wedded to Pedro prince of Lisbon. Because of this, Pound relates, Ignez became 'the cause of jealousy, and of conspiracy' in the court, and this jealousy led to her murder. Upon his succession to the throne, Pedro exhumed her body and forced the court to pay homage to 'the double throne of the dead queen and her king'. 'The tale of Ignez', Pound suggests,

... will perhaps never be written greatly, for art becomes necessary only when life is inarticulate and when art is not an expression, but a mirroring, of life, it is necessary only when life is apparently without design; that is, when the conclusion or results of given causes are so far removed or so hidden, that art alone can show their relation. Art that mirrors life is unsatisfactory, and the great poem, "Ignez da Castro," was written in deeds by King Pedro.  
(p. 218)

Pedro's 'deeds' inhere, as does the poetry of the 'outlaw' and gaolbird François Villon treated earlier in the study, in activities which operate 'below the voice of his age's convention' (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 170) and thus escape their authority. In exhuming Ignez, however, Pedro defies not only authority as symbolised by the court but the authority of sequential time itself, insisting that, as Pound would transcribe it later, his desire for Ignez must be situated in the domain of myth, for she exists '... among the flowers, / As once was Proserpine'.<sup>53</sup> The mythic resonance of such deeds discloses a potent

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52. *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 222. In 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' Pound would claim that 'In every art I can think of we are dammed and clogged by the mimetic' (*Selected Prose*, pp. 21-43, p. 42).

53. This quotation is taken from 'Three Cantos', or the 'Ur-Cantos' which preceded *The Cantos* proper and would eventually be discarded - not least, perhaps, because they made aspects of Pound's project too explicit. The lines occur in



paradigm which underlies Pound's thinking upon an 'active' aesthetics, for, in its precedence to the Platonic 'split' in Western thinking myth presents a primal example of the non-divorce of art and the 'lived' - 'Greek philosophy, and European in its wake', he writes, 'degenerated into an attack on mythology and mythology is, perforce, totalitarian' ('Mang Tsze', p. 101).

The cultural holism implicit in Pound's valorisation of myth presents itself to contemporary thinking as a 'nostalgia for prehistory' based upon an irrational and 'sentimental misunderstanding of the violence that underlies all ritual and all mythology', or what Adorno might adduce as the supreme paradigm of a 'totalised' system in which 'that which tolerates nothing beyond itself is understood to be the whole'.<sup>54</sup> What such thinking must also acknowledge, however, is that the 'prelapsarian' category of myth is the product and even the culmination of certain rational methodologies - as Michael Levenson points out, it was the efforts of modern European anthropology that 'unearthed' and appropriated the 'primitive', thus allowing a confrontation between the rational and the irrational which posed 'not a challenge to the civilized mind but a triumph of that mind'.<sup>55</sup> In modernist aesthetics mythopoeia comes to stage the ambivalence of this legacy. The modernist artwork frequently thematises myth or suggests itself as a model or echo of its form or mode of 'belief', but this occurs in a self-consciously synthetic register in which the rational confronts the pre-rational, in a variety of ways, under the 'sign' of the aesthetic.<sup>56</sup>

The category of the mythic or primitive, then, exists in an always ambivalent relation to the 'civilized', being its product, its pre-rational 'other', and a site where aesthetics intersect with modern epistemology. What the unstable 'otherness' of myth also allows is a speculative condition of culture marked by the absence of authority - as Pound perceived when he announced that 'The Greeks had no world outside, no empire, metropolis, etc. etc.' (*Letters*, p. 90) Although this statement refers to the supposed introspection of Greek political culture, it transposes readily into a description of the 'totality' or the undifferentiation of the aesthetic and the 'vital' in pre-Socratic culture as Pound configured it - presenting the triumph of the aesthetic in authority's absence.

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Three Cantos II, *Poetry*, 4 (July 1917), pp. 180-88, p. 187; Three Cantos I and III appear respectively in *Poetry*, 10, 3 (June 1917), pp. 113-21, and 5 (August 1917), pp. 248-54.

54. Quotations are taken from Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons*, p. 276, and Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, translated by Knut Tarnowski and Fredric Will (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 140.

55. Levenson, *The Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 207.

56. I take these points from drafts of Michael Bell's study of the diversity of mythopoeic concerns in modernist aesthetics, *Modernism and Mythopoeia* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).



This can occur because the mythic condition as it confronts modernity pre-dates analytical distinctions between subject and object, appearance and reality, language and referent, for its apparently 'aesthetic' forms mark the primal *emergence* of the world as a product of human articulation. Ernst Cassirer has defined this in terms of a 'radical' metaphoric activity in language which brings the environment into being through the transpositions which mythic metaphors 'mark' upon an initially 'unremarked' external world. Thus the world acquires shape only through the interinvolvement of the environment, the human senses and 'the forms of human practices' as mythic language posits them.<sup>57</sup> The 'representations', 'beliefs' and 'language' of myth can then be considered as 'totalitarian' in the Poundian sense in that they are equiprimordial with the emergence of consciousness, human activity, and the world it inhabits.

If the mythic sensibility and its forms can be speculatively presented as an ontological mode of *art* for which can be posited no point of autonomous origin or difference that distinguishes it from the *lived*, then in *The Spirit of Romance* Pound had sought to express this unity of cultural expression and production through metaphors which collapse the difference between the human senses and an external universe of 'fluid force'. This emerges fully in a description of the mythic sensibility as Pound conceives it:

We have about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germinal universe of wood alive, of stone alive... the consciousness of some seems to rest, or to have its centre, more properly, in what the Greek psychologists called the *phantastikon*. Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos. And with certain others their consciousness is "germinal." Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or the grain, or the blossom. And these minds are the more poetic, and they affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth. And this latter sort of mind is close on the vital universe; and the strength of the Greek beauty rests in this, that it is ever at the interpretation of this vital universe, by its signs of gods and godly attendants and oreads. (pp. 92-3)

Situating 'life' in a universe of 'fluid force' Pound breaks down the distinction between organic and non-organic entities ('wood', 'stone' and perception alike are 'germinal') in order to posit a world of interaction and intercourse - the human body itself being deconstituted into its material elements to make of it a nexus of 'fluid' relations rather than an entity distinct or differentiated from its environment. Thus the condition of myth underwrites Pound's idea of a 'vital' undifferentiation or interaction of categories and reasserts an antagonism between 'germinal' and merely 'reflective'

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57. The quoted phrase is taken from Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), p. 41; for an extended discussion of 'radical metaphor' see pp. 87-95. For a recent formulation of similar ideas see Colin Falck's *Myth, Truth and Literature: Towards a True Post-Modernism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially chapters 2 and 5.

conceptions of aesthetics. Of the sensibility which experiences 'mythically' Pound would assert that its visions 'are for them *real*', just as he would later pose himself the question 'What is a god?' and answer 'A god is an eternal state of mind',<sup>58</sup> implying that such a consciousness is unable to deliver any 'explanation' of the world which takes distinctions between subjective perception and a reality 'outside' it as given ('The Greeks had no world outside').

That the echo of such an archaic undifferentiation is still available for modernity is apparent in the shape of the *paideuma*, for it is the 'complex of ideas which is in a given time *germinal*', having the same creative relation to culture as the seed to the tree. Despite the organicism of such thinking the 'manufactured' nature of the *paideuma* refracts metaphoric 'interpretation' through the category of artifice, 'de-authorising' it at the same time that it is presented as a totalitarian paradigm of culture. Here Pound re-treads trails already blazed by the philosophy of Nietzsche, whose thinking similarly situates itself on the borderline between 'totalism' and artifice.

Embarking upon a projected exploration of the historical antagonism between art and knowledge in philosophy in order to 'comprehend the internal coherence and necessity of every true culture', Nietzsche's early works continually return to pre-Socratic thinking and myth as cultural modes which negate or counter inherited discourses.<sup>59</sup> In these works Nietzsche's theme is the 'necessary' illusion that art (and its archetype myth) performs within a living culture. A culture's salvation, he seeks to show, lies not in the abstract knowledge that it acquires in its quest for 'truth', but in its creativity - 'not in *knowing*, but in *creating*!', for it is through such essentially 'unauthorised' creation that a culture is affirmed and invested with sustaining beliefs. Nietzsche would suggest that 'Knowing is probably even a substitute for culture', and would speculate, as Pound would speculate, that for modernity 'might not art itself perhaps be capable of creating a religion, of giving birth to myth? This was the case among the Greeks'.<sup>60</sup>

Nietzsche had taken the 'unity' of a culture informed by 'art' or 'myth' as the confutation of any system comprised of ontological abstraction and moral doctrine, and had stressed the *figural*ity of all

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58. *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 92, and 'Religio, or, The Child's Guide to Knowledge', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 47-8, p. 47.

59. The quoted phrase is taken from Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge' in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press International, 1979), pp. 3-58, p. 10. Despite the fact that Pound had read Nietzsche, I do not wish to argue here that Nietzsche's writings *directly* influenced Pound. As Kathryn V. Lindberg's study of Pound's Nietzschean heritage shows, the influence of the philosopher upon the poet was strong but almost totally indirect, accreting rather through Pound's interest in a group of thinkers and writers who had themselves been influenced by Nietzsche (Leo Frobenius, Remy de Gourmont and Oswald Spengler for instance; see Lindberg's *Reading Pound Reading*, pp. 5-13).

60. Quotations are taken from 'The Philosopher', p. 33, p. 34 and p. 13 respectively.



procedures of knowing, proclaiming that '... there is no "real" expression and *no real knowing apart from metaphor*' ('The Philosopher', p. 50). This point is argued at length in the essay 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense', where Nietzsche suggests that the overarching goals of traditional philosophy have assumed a false dichotomy, for their procedures can be reduced to formulaic attempts to describe 'the adequate expression of an object in the subject'.<sup>61</sup> The common 'resolution' of this philosophical dichotomy of subject and object, knower and known, demands a relation between categories which *elides* the mediated transference of the object into a 'consciousness' or an anthropocentric system of knowledge. Thus 'Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things' ('On Truth and Lies', p. 83), and yet the processes of mediation, transference and equation involved in such a 'becoming' of knowing is denied by a philosophy for which language is an ideally transparent medium.

Metaphor, which etymologically denotes an active process of 'passing over' or transference from one realm to another, is a figure which must be seen to contaminate dualist, logical and abstract schemes of knowledge. Nietzsche can thus celebrate the 'stimulus' which 'the lie' of art and the 'artificial', figural and creative appropriations of poetry inject into the processes that legitimise the traditional grounds of truth and the 'knowledge drive'. Refusing any 'legislation of language' (p. 81) and any concomitant failure to acknowledge *responsibility* for truth's origin in trope or artifice Nietzsche can ask -

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force... (p. 84)

It is precisely this figural 'work' which, Nietzsche insists, is occulted by the authority of philosophy, and for Nietzsche, like Pound, liberation from knowing would allow life to seek 'a new realm and another channel for its activity', one it could find 'in *myth* and in *art* generally' (p. 89). Thus early Greek culture, poetry and myth become paradigms *par excellence* of forms by which 'a culture can take shape and art's mastery over life can be established' (p. 90).

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61. 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' in *Philosophy and Truth*, pp. 79-97, p. 86; see also Breazeale's introductory comments (pp. xxvii-xxxiv) and Schwartz' *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early 20th-Century Thought* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 75-79 for useful discussions of this essay. Schwartz' study is generally valuable in its tracing of the breaks and continuities between Nietzsche's thought, the writings of other modern philosophers, and the poetics of modernism.

For Nietzsche the 'artifice' that governs knowing translates directly into a creative apprehension of reality, realising the 'Overcoming of knowledge by means of the powers that *fashion myths*' ('The Philosopher', p. 19). Further parallels between Nietzsche and Pound will be drawn shortly. What must be stressed here is that it is only in a condition related to that of mythic and poetic 'radical emergence' that the processes of interaction and transformation which Pound desires the aesthetic order to perform will be viable and 'true', for their function is, as in Nietzsche, dependent upon their precedence to, or subversion of, any distinction between their 'vital' artifice and extrinsic authority:

Our only measure of truth is... our own perception of truth. The undeniable tradition of metamorphoses teaches us that things do not remain always the same. They become other things by swift and unanalysable process. It was only when men began to mistrust the myths and to tell nasty lies about the Gods for a moral purpose that these matters became hopelessly confused. ('Arnold Dolmetsch', p. 431)

The mythic element in the modern *paideuma* attempts to dispel this confusion, and recover 'the powers that fashion myths' for, as the passage which invoked the poem 'written in deeds' by King Pedro asserts, the regeneration of an 'inarticulate' culture can occur through the provision of a 'design' - a design of which, in canto III, the 'Ignez' episode will become a 'mythic' element (*The Cantos*, p. 12). The rationale for Pound's intertextual poetics can be located in such a design, as can his artistic didacticism, for 'A revelation is always didactic' (*Letters*, p. 180). In order for art to become 'vital' in a modern context, however, the authority that lies behind such revelatory procedures must itself disappear, and the 'activity' of art and its radical metaphoric 'interpretations' distanced from any context in which a confusion of art with a 'moral purpose' might manifest itself. The reasoning behind this is that once the artwork is removed from a subordinate or augmentative role in relation to authority it becomes, as it once was in myth, *activated*. As Pound and Nietzsche perceive, when art or language is presented through a context in which authority cannot find a purchase, the concept and term *artwork* becomes radically verbalised.

Although Pound can be seen to deny and dogmatically assert his 'personality' and his authorial authority at the same time,<sup>62</sup> this authority is always strategically problematised or renegotiated, as it is in Nietzsche, by the primacy of the 'work' which discloses the 'design' of history. Early evidence of this is presented in the anthological form of *The Spirit of Romance*, for in aspiring to allow the selection and presentation of the texts themselves to predominate over the author's critical 'presentation

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62. This elision and assertion of authority forms the basis of Maud Ellmann's analysis of Pound in *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), where the stress falls upon tensions at deep textual levels in a modernist poetics whose authority comes 'into being through its own repudiation of itself' (p. 13).



of opinion' the study prioritises the text or artwork in a way that Pound's own 'presentative' intertextual poetics would later incorporate and amplify.<sup>63</sup> This practice would find characteristically arcane poetic expression in *The Cantos* where the city, the archetypal historical 'ground' of authority and its augmentation (the 'metropolis', the 'empire') appears literally 'unfounded' in the ideal locus of Ecbatana - 'Great bulk, huge mass, thesaurus; / Ecbatan, the clock ticks and fades out'.<sup>64</sup> Like Pound's writing itself, the city becomes a treasure-house of language, or an 'anthology' of art ('thesaurus') rather than the site of an authoritative foundation. It is literally situated 'out' of time and subject to a logic which only the 'activity' of the artwork comprehends. As will be seen, *The Cantos* eventually transform themselves into such a 'city' or site where fragments of history (literature, myth, legend, political and economic tracts, histories and biographies) reveal their significance within an 'art' of history. That such a 'revelation' exists in a strictly antagonistic relationship to authority as Pound conceives it will become apparent at the end of this chapter when the 'Malatesta' cantos are considered.

What this preference for 'artefacts' over 'presentation of opinion' also presumes is a distinction between an active and empowering aesthetic and a debilitating critique. This issue is raised directly in *The Spirit of Romance* through the dismissal of a conception of literature inherited from Matthew Arnold, who, as Pound relates, frequently suggests that the arts exist as a "'criticism of life'".<sup>65</sup> It is the assumed critical distance and differentiation between art and the lived that Pound would react against here, for the possibility of critique finds purchase only in the space of the 'divorce of art and life' which he sought to annul. If the text is to eventually become an empowering 'ball of light in one's hand', it is precisely the disappearance of the authoritative space and difference that critique inhabits which signals the 'vital' synthesis of art and lived culture.<sup>66</sup>

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63. *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 9. As Paul Smith writes in *Pound Revised*, 'what very often constitutes the *activa vita* in the *Cantos* is literature itself - written items, documents... letters, other books and poems' (p. 25), and Pound would stress from his earliest writings onward that 'The artist seeks out the luminous detail. He does not comment' ('I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 23). On Pound's belief in the efficacy of the anthology and his conviction that the 'text itself' is its own best commentary see K. K. Ruthven, *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 137-8.

64. *The Cantos*, p. 16. For a concise discussion of the relevance of Ecbatan in *The Cantos* see Carroll F. Terrell's *A Companion to 'The Cantos' of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 14.

65. *Spirit of Romance*, p. 222; Pound would counter this claim by presenting a metaphoric unity between the categories of poetry and life - 'Poetry is about as much a "criticism of life" as red-hot iron is a criticism of fire'. Arnold's definition of poetry as a 'criticism of life' can be found in his 'The Study of Poetry', in *Essays in Criticism*, second series (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), pp. 1-55, p. 5 and *passim*, and 'Wordsworth', *ibid*, pp. 122-62, pp. 143-4.

66. Later Pound would concede that in art some forms and subjects of necessity contain 'a "criticism of life" or of art', but would qualify this statement by asserting that such works 'do not contain a vortex' (footnote in *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 94). That the force of Pound's aesthetics are to a great extent generated by an opposition to critique can be seen if Fredric Jameson's claim that 'It is clear that the work of art cannot itself be asked to change the world or to transform itself into political praxis' (*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* [London: Methuen, 1981], p. 234) is considered, for Pound's programme attempts precisely to *invert* the assumptions behind any such treatment of the artwork

The repudiation of Arnold's thesis itself makes an early gesture towards a developing distinction between the respectively negative and affirmative functions of prose and poetry. For Pound, poetry would conform to principles of economy, visualisation and condensation in its ability to signify an 'idea whole at a stroke, by a single symbolic motion',<sup>67</sup> while prose would remain prey to the dissipations and 'difference' of the discursive and the conceptual. Prose and narrative were thus complicit with the 'linearity' which radically aesthetic or 'poetic' impulses creatively subverted - 'poetry', Pound would insist, 'is totalitarian in any confrontation with prose... Man gittin' Kulchur had better try poetry first' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 121). As will become clear in later chapters, even modern prose, with its tendency to promote ironic self-knowledge and critical difference and distancing in the relations it inscribes between cultural discourses and the reader, has a primarily negative function within his schema. While it granted insights into modernity's plight, prose remained the art of 'diagnostic' inauthenticity for Pound; the acritical and affirmative movements of poetics, however, promised the art of 'cure', and it is through a relation to 'positive' desires that the synthesis of poetry and the 'vital' is articulated:

Most good prose arises, perhaps, from an instinct of negation; is the detailed, convincing analysis of something detestable; of something which one wants to eliminate. Poetry is the assertion of a positive, i.e., of desire, and endures for a longer period.<sup>68</sup>

The significance of poetry as a metaphoric or poetic configuration of desire will be developed in the next chapter. What will be attempted now is the placing of Pound's 'positive', 'revelatory' and 'verbalised' conception of the artwork into a context where its unauthorised but 'founding' role can be perceived.

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as an object of ideological analysis, and configure it as the site where 'praxis' originates. On the way that such a resistance to critique 'internalises' the 'rules' of Pound's programme and avoids questions of its own authority see Ian F. A. Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 130.

67. This phrase is taken from Hudson Maxim's *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language* (1910) as cited by Bell in *Critic as Scientist*, p. 29. As Bell notes, Pound reviewed Maxim's book and later used his ideas, unacknowledged, in his essay 'The Wisdom of Poetry', and Maxim's notion of poetic expression as a 'conservation of energy' would remain central in Pound's thinking (see Bell, pp. 28-30).

68. From a footnote to the essay 'Henry James', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 295-338, p. 324; for the distinction between an art of 'diagnosis' and 'cure' see 'The Serious Artist', *ibid*, pp. 41-57, p. 45. Paul de Man's discussion of ironic language in 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' (in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second revised edition [London: Routledge, 1989], pp. 187-228) is useful here, for it casts irony as the signature of an inauthentic relation or 'difference' between self and expression. This is exactly the function that Pound wished to ascribe to modern prose - the ironic articulation of 'something which one wants to eliminate'; the affirmative movements of a vital poetics can, in turn, be seen in terms of a desire to 'eliminate' precisely this difference between self and expression.



## Art, Virtù and Aesthetic Foundation

In promoting a condition of modern culture in which a 'forgetting' of the authority of tradition is realised in the 'presence' of art, Pound wilfully blurs the distinction between notions of culture as an imposition or as an 'unconscious possession' - the *paideuma* being neither 'culture' nor *Kultur*.<sup>69</sup> It is in the elusive form of a 'making' in the aesthetic sense that Pound presents his models of culture, order and history, aware that aesthetics can problematise the authority of each of these categories. Here again, Pound's thinking moves in spaces already cleared by Nietzsche.

In the face of crises in modern authority Nietzsche would claim that 'Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decaden[t] forms of man', while presenting as their antidote, as in his essay upon metaphor, 'The *countermovement: art*'. Such thinking would be both empowering and daunting in its ability to configure the world as the product of a radically 'unauthorised' or aesthetic human creativity, and Nietzsche would insist that in such conditions 'we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art - for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*'.<sup>70</sup>

Because of their mutual use of the aesthetic in their rethinking of modernity, Poundian and Nietzschean approaches to history often coincide. For the earlier philosopher, knowledge 'taken in excess', and a passively retrospective knowledge of history in particular, vitiated the impulse towards evaluation and decision as an 'inner' process leading to action - as in Pound's thinking, 'Ideas' would be 'true' only 'as they go into action' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 188). The various 'external', 'alien and disconnected' inputs of modern historical awareness as Nietzsche configured them imparted to the subject of modernity the temperament of a passive spectator or on-looker upon history, and, in phrases that have already found their echo in Pound, 'no real culture at all, but only a kind of knowledge about culture'. Nietzsche would propose the idea of an unhistorical 'horizon' in which humanity could 'learn to forget' as a remedy for such inertia, and present this 'creative' forgetting as an aesthetic enterprise: 'only if history can bear being transformed into a work of art, that is, to become a pure art form, may it perhaps preserve instincts or even rouse them'.<sup>71</sup>

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69. See Michael North's discussion of this ambiguity in 'Where Memory Faileth: Forgetfulness and a Poem Including History', in *The Legacy of Kulchur*, edited by Marcel Smith and William A. Ulmer (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 145-165, p. 152.

70. Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, p. 419, and *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 52.

71. Quotations are drawn from Nietzsche's *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, translated by Peter Preuss (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 23-4, p. 11, p. 8 and p. 39.

Pound and Nietzsche would concur in proclaiming a 'vital' poetics as 'the assertion of a positive' against the negativity of inherited narratives. The philosopher would define the creative and selective *use* of history 'for life' as an artistic overcoming of 'pessimism in the face of history' (*Will To Power*, p. 167), for an 'art' of history demanded that affirmation take the place of 'knowing' and critique. For Nietzsche such thinking, as in his considerations of myth and metaphor, could simultaneously dissolve historical narratives and hold out the promise of their creative reformation, for the relative *value* of modes of 'aesthetic' interpretation as they informed a lived culture or underscored its disaffections could be encountered. Modern thinking might thus be delivered from nihilism, for an aesthetics of history suggest that 'the value of the world lies in our interpretation' while implying that there is 'No limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted; every interpretation a symptom of growth or decline' (*Will To Power*, P. 330 and p. 326).

In order to resist being overwhelmed and 'paralysed' by 'negative' historical knowledge, Nietzsche suggests, 'modern consciousness' must itself be historicised, and its sense of history turned against both itself and the knowledge that it has produced: 'Knowledge *must* turn its sting against itself - this... is the imperative of the spirit of the "new age" if it really does contain something new' ('On the Advantage...', p. 45). There is then an intimate relationship between Nietzschean and Poundian disavowals of 'knowledge' in favour of historical 'forgetting' or an aesthetic production which implies the 'making' of history. However, there is a sense in which Nietzsche's writings turn the 'sting' of knowledge against itself, filtering it through ideas of art, while remaining within the bounds of critique; that is, they refuse to re-establish conceptions of culture, history or being, leaving them radically 'open' by inverting or problematising philosophical perspectives without offering stable forms of reconstruction.<sup>72</sup>

Nietzschean history differs from its Poundian counterpart at this point. Where Nietzschean thinking invokes the category of aesthetics in order to generate a critical dynamic, Pound retains broadly Nietzschean principles of the instability of forms while pursuing a literal realisation of the 'use' of history that prioritises the artist in any such 'making'. As was the case with Pound's relation to more

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72. Nietzsche's presentation of the practice of such reflexive critique itself as the spirit of the 'new age' is emphasised by recent readers of his work such as Gilles Deleuze, who suggests that in being 'Confronted with the ways in which our societies become progressively decodified and unregulated, in which our codes break down at every point, Nietzsche is the only thinker who makes no attempt at recodification'. (See 'Nomad Thought' in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, edited by David B. Allison [Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1985], pp. 142-149, p. 143. A similar idea of 'decodification' lies behind Derrida's notion of the affirmation of the 'play' of 'a world of signs' in Nietzsche; see 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 292.



recent conceptions of the radicalism of aesthetics, a subversive and critical trajectory is taken by him only to be defined as the path to a 'new order'.

The kind of imperatives that Pound considered an aesthetics of history to pose to the practice of the modern artist appeared in 1911 under the self-promoting title 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'. Here he would begin a series of essays which outlined a 'New Method in Scholarship' or 'the method of Luminous Detail' (a method opposed, as in Nietzsche's revision of historicism, to the 'prevailing mode' of 'multitudinous detail'). This method outlined an 'heretical' practice in which the contemporary artist, through selective presentation of 'detail' drawn from his environment and the art of precursors, produced an artwork which granted 'sudden insight' into historical patternings which 'common practice' remained blind to. 'In the history of the development of civilisation or of literature, we come upon such interpreting detail' Pound would declare, conflating and interrelating notions of a 'lived' history and its artistic products (civilisation *or* literature) within a poetics of history:

The artist seeks out the luminous detail and presents it. He does not comment. His work remains the permanent basis of psychology and metaphysics. Each historian will 'have ideas' - presumably different from other historians - imperfect inductions, varying as the fashions, but the luminous details remain unaltered.<sup>73</sup>

What these essays prefigure is the artistic processing of culture that would later be contained under the rubric of the *paideuma* or 'making' of history. By such a method Pound sought to present an 'intelligence of a period' which was 'not to be gathered from a great array of facts of the other sort'; such facts were 'hard to find' but were 'swift and easy of transmission. They govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit' (pp. 22-3). Here Pound institutes a distinction between qualities of 'fact' that attests to the incursion of artifice into the 'factual' realm, invoking a sense of fact as an action, 'doing' or *facere* which pertains to a making or performance. History may be replete with facts but its meanings are not pre-given; they must be demonstrated or 'made' through the 'design' of the artist and the principles of the artwork: 'great works of art', Pound would insist elsewhere, are 'lords over fact' (*Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 92). This 'government' of facts provided the quality which ensured that 'a given work of art persists' ('Osiris', p. 28) for Pound, and he would designate both this practice and its quality as the *virtù* of the artist and artwork:

Having discovered his own virtue the artist will be more likely to discern and allow for a particular *virtù* in others. The erection of the microcosmos consists in discriminating these other powers and in holding them in orderly arrangement about one's own. (p. 29)

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73. Quotations are taken from 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 21, p. 22 and p. 23.

The virtuous 'microcosmos' constructed by the discerning artist will oppose the 'sundry patches of the macrocosmos' reflected by a merely 'passive' sensibility. In their respective formulations of modern history as a radical aesthetic production Pound and Nietzsche would both have recourse to the concept of *virtù*. For Nietzsche it would invoke an idea of the 'good', in that 'good is having some ability and using that to create... *virtù* in the Italian Renaissance sense' (*Will To Power*, p. 48). Pound too would utilise it in this sense, but its importance to his aesthetic project would burgeon as it came to underpin this project in its entirety: to complete a quotation whose significance has already been shown, if in dealing with the aesthetic 'You deal with an interactive force', it is 'the *virtu* in short' which defines this force for Pound.

Like *paideuma*, *virtù* in Pound's thinking sits ambivalently between sets of ideas and proclaims its indifference to established categories at the same time that it insists upon the viability of syntheses that it itself performs. In Pound's Italian usage *virtù* becomes a term which simultaneously evokes the revelatory and transforming power of the artistic imagination, and, as in Nietzsche's usage, the Renaissance *realpolitik* of Niccolò Machiavelli - a figure complimented by Pound in the 'Osiris' essays for perceiving that 'The life of the race is concentrated in a few individuals' and later for considering 'History' as 'a school book for princes'.<sup>74</sup>

While commentators upon Machiavelli's texts have described *virtù* as a concept pivotal to his political thought, there is much debate upon its meaning, debate that is intensified by Machiavelli's consciously anti-Christian use of a 'pagan' term whose significations, by the Renaissance, had been naturalised within a Christian morality and a politically Humanist conception of 'virtue'.<sup>75</sup>

For Pound and Nietzsche, the brutal and alien quality of the connotations of the term for modernity would themselves be of value. In Machiavelli's *The Prince* *virtù* denotes a virile, energetic quality; it signifies good governance, prowess, efficacy, will-power, reputé and - in Machiavelli's sceptical use of the concept - necessity. As one of the first theorists of the modern secular state Machiavelli is concerned with power and the ways in which it can be obtained and maintained; questions of precedent authority and morality concern him only in so far as they pertain to the activity of pragmatic

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74. See 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 38, and *The Cantos*, p. 280; for Nietzsche's reflections on Machiavelli see *The Will To Power*, pp. 170-71.

75. Hence the characterisation of Machiavelli as a thinker whose work elided the moral opposition between 'virtue' and 'vice'; see Quentin Skinner's *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 39-40. T. S. Eliot recognised the revolutionary secularism of Machiavelli's political thought when he wrote of 'the world of human motives' presented in his depiction of 'humanity without the addition of superhuman Grace... What Machiavelli did not see about human nature is the myth of human goodness which for liberal thought replaces the belief in Divine Grace' ('Machiavelli' in *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* [London: Faber and Faber, 1928], pp. 39-52, p. 50).



governance and necessity in the present. Thus Machiavelli's procedures are antagonistic to both past (theocratic) and emergent (humanist) systems of authority, and it is precisely this estrangement from systems of morality and ethics which decrees that his principles exist as 'an art (*techne*) of politics'.<sup>76</sup>

Machiavelli's notoriety was achieved through his analysis of the way that a polity could be actively *founded*, or the ways in which it could newly establish and 'authorise' itself. Such a conception of the political, marked at its inception by contingency and a historical *lack* of authority held obvious appeal for Pound, for it provided a 'luminous' precedent for a *virtuous* refounding of modern civilisation upon 'poetic' principles *sans* authority and legitimacy.

Not authority but a different kind of political foundation was needed for the polity 'made new' as Pound conceived it, and Machiavellian *virtù* presented itself as a concept whose proximity to aesthetics complemented Pound's general project. But within this project *virtù* becomes a flagrantly 'interactive' term, for it is compounded of a political concept and a principle which emerged in modern literary criticism as a mark of artistic 'potency': Pound would state that 'Pater has explained its meaning in the preface to his "The Renaissance"'.<sup>77</sup>

Pound's sympathy with Walter Pater is important, for Pater's critical writings had been central to an early British *avant-garde* aestheticism. Reacting against the strong sense of historical continuity and tradition which had informed dominant attitudes in the nineteenth-century, Pater and others had valorised specifically aesthetic or literary traditions and procedures and stressed the way in which aesthetic values infiltrated other areas of thinking. Thus, there is a direct connection between Pater's subjective and 'impressionistic' approach to the appraisal of the artistic process and the growing modern sense that history itself could be considered as a cultural 'artwork', and while many of his contemporaries attacked him for the lack of 'historic sense' in his evaluations of past art, others

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76. I take this phrase from Ernst Cassirer's 'Implications of the New Theory of the State' in Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Robert M. Adams (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 155-169, p. 168. A description of the state and statecraft as an 'artefact' and an 'art' in Machiavelli's thinking can be found in Isaiah Berlin's 'The Question of Machiavelli', *ibid*, pp. 206-36, p. 211. Jean Baudrillard has recently written of the 'emergence' of the political during the Renaissance through the figure of Machiavelli, describing it in similarly 'aesthetic' terms as something which 'was at first only a pure game of signs, a pure strategy which was not burdened with any social or historical "truth"', being constituted by 'semiurgy and strategy, not ideology' (see Baudrillard, *In The Shadow of the Silent Majorities, or The End of the Social and Other Essays*, translated by Paul Foss, John Johnston and Paul Patton [New York: Semiotext(e), 1983], p. 16).

77. See Pound's 1910 introduction to 'Cavalcanti Poems' in *The Translations of Ezra Pound*, introduced by Hugh Kenner (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 18.



recognised that his art-centred methods actually exposed the constraints of historicism by suggesting that 'any account of the past was necessarily a construction placed upon it by the present'.<sup>78</sup>

As Perry Meisel has argued, such thinking describes an opposition between the function of critical and aesthetic language as configured by Pater and Arnold respectively (an opposition which Pound effectively re-states). For Arnold, criticism had sought to restrain or regulate the overdeterminations which literary - or by extension 'figurative' - language contained by rendering it 'transparent' to critique. Pater, however, would consider the overdetermined nature of literary language to give special insights into the texture of the real, and would announce that in the artist's use of literary style 'he will not treat coloured glass as if it were clear; and while half the world is using figure unconsciously, will be fully aware... of all that latent figurative texture in speech'.<sup>79</sup>

Pater had attempted in the 'Preface' to defend an impressionistic 'aesthetic' criticism against the search for a definition of 'beauty' in the abstract which had characterised German philosophy and aesthetics. He returned (as Pound would) to the Greek root of the term 'aesthetic' in order to focus upon the interactive role of the senses in art and criticism, consciously problematising the dichotomy between critic and artist by citing Arnold's critical injunction 'To see the object as in itself it really is' only to collapse this given differentiation between object and viewer into an interinvolved aesthetic:

... the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is... The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals... are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities.<sup>80</sup>

The injunction to which Pater alludes would itself be analysed by Arnold in his essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', the broad theme of which is the dependence of the 'creative' act upon a normative critical context.<sup>81</sup> In collapsing the distinction between artist and critic in an 'impressionistic' criticism, however, Pater effectively elides not only this distinction, but the distinction between art and its 'effects', or between art and moral authority.

Subsequent critiques of Pater suggest that the 'aesthetic' impulses behind his criticism ushered art and its critical appreciation out of the realm of cultural relevance and responsibility.<sup>82</sup> For Pater,

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78. I take this phrase from Josephine M. Guy's *The British Avant-Garde: The Theory and Politics of Tradition* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 114.

79. From Pater's 'Style', in *Appreciations with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), pp. 1-36, p. 17; for Meisel's treatment of the opposition between Pater and Arnold see *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism After 1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), especially chapter 1.

80. Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan and co., 1925), p. x.

81. See Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Essays in Criticism* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), pp. 1-41.

82. Patrick Parrinder writes in *Authors and Authority: English and American Criticism 1750-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1991), for instance, that Pater's aesthetic criticism separates 'the critical act itself from 'considerations of moral



however, one of the 'virtues' of art was its ability to configure its own 'living authority'. Pater's own enthusiasm for art was derived to a great extent from the visionary impulses of the early Romantics, and those of Wordsworth in particular. In Wordsworth's disengagement from an inherited poetic tradition, Pater considered that the poet had created a language 'faithful to the colouring of his own spirit' which contained a 'living authority'; thus Wordsworth could 'break through the consecrated poetic associations of a century, and speak the language that was his, that was to become in a measure the language of the next generation' ('Style', pp. 11-12). That this aesthetic entry into history comprised the 'virtue' of art would be made clear in the preface to *The Renaissance* which Pound indicates:

Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystalised a part, but only a part of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But... we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and colour from local influences... Well! that is the *virtue*, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry... (pp. xii-xii)

For Pater's Wordsworth, as for Pound's Machiavelli, 'virtue' 'power' and 'living authority' attain definition through their 'modern' break with the past and their indifference to precedent moral codes. For Pater 'The office of the poet is not that of the moralist' and virtuous art constitutes 'a higher morality'.<sup>83</sup> The 'strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature' thus becomes a 'virtuous' poetic *production* which the reader must confront in Wordsworth, a production whose 'fusion and transformation' of the 'life' of the human and its environment becomes, to borrow a Poundian term, the founding of a 'microcosmos' which enters 'the language of the next generation'.

In Paterian aestheticism, however, a 'perpetual weaving and unweaving' (*The Renaissance*, p. 249) of discrete categories and identities occurs in the creation of, or any interaction with, 'virtuous' art. Primarily, the aesthetic provides 'a difference for the sense' or a differential play through which the categories of the aesthetic and the world are produced.<sup>84</sup> For Pound, however, Pater's conception of art as a virtuous and historical 'activity' presented the idea that *art itself* could 'found' and 'authorise' a world, precisely because the artistic vision, the world, and its ordering had a common focus in the virtuous artwork. Like the Nietzschean conception of history as an 'artform', the notion of virtue that

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responsibility' (p. 179); similar conclusions are drawn by Raymond Williams in his discussion of the 'New Aesthetics' in *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 169-175.

83. 'Wordsworth' in *Appreciations*, pp. 37-63, p. 58 and p. 61.

84. The phrase 'a difference for the sense' is taken from Pater's 'The Child in the House', in *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*, edited by Harold Bloom (New York and London: Signet Classics, 1974), pp. 1-16, p. 3; for a discussion of differentiation as a 'deconstructive' principle in Pater's aesthetics see Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern*, p. 57.

Pound draws from Pater suggests that such 'artwork' itself produces a 'truth' of life, and 'founds' aspects of a 'microcosmos'; in the recirculation of the aggregate 'details' of such foundational aesthetics the modern *paideuma* resides. After citing Machiavelli in *Guide To Kulchur* Pound declares that 'When the vortices of power and the vortices of culture coincide, you have an era of brilliance' (p. 266). Such an era was at hand for Pound, for in collapsing Paterian aesthetic principles with an 'unauthorised' Machiavellian conception of the political a new order of *virtù* had been discovered, one which manifestly obliterated the difference between art and the 'vital'.

The de-authorised or actively aestheticised foundation of culture as Pound conceived it can be explored further by drawing upon the work of a more recent figure, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger would approach thinking about art by attending to questions of 'being' and its origin and ground, and for him (as for Pound, Pater and Nietzsche) art promised to break down the established barriers which dichotomised aesthetic experience and objective reality by revealing the essential non-separation of self and world. Heidegger insisted that 'The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings' for 'Art is truth setting itself to work'. That is, that like myth in modern conceptions of its function, art discloses the true 'origin' of the world through the *work* that it performs upon a mundane, neutral or 'unrevealed' existence. In 'The Origin of the Work of Art' Heidegger illustrates this point by adducing a pair of work shoes as painted by Van Gogh. As an article of 'equipment' usually 'passed over' or 'passed through', the shoes are allowed to disclose their own being and intimate the world of their owner when 'put to work' in the painting. The shoes are thus transformed by their 'presentation' in art (which amounts to more than a mere 'representation') and emerge as part of the 'lived' world of the peasant. *Techne* thus comes to denote for Heidegger 'a mode of knowing', and the world emerges as a 'work', a 'setting forth, a making' wherein 'what is as a whole' is 'brought into unconcealedness and held therein' within the artwork.<sup>85</sup>

Heidegger's self-consciously 'poetic' prose posits the 'earth' as a neutrality in which the artwork establishes a site or 'clearing' from which a particular 'world' can emerge (a 'location' upon a stream is brought into being, for instance, by the 'artwork' of a bridge; the location does not pre-exist the bridge, 'rather a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge'). For Heidegger art in the broad sense does not 'represent' but rather 'deconceals' its content and in so doing 'sets forth' the world that is its context by disclosing undifferentiated or interinvolved aspects of being. The world *emerges* through

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85. Quotations are taken from Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 17-87, p. 39, p. 59, p. 45 and p. 56.



the spaces and clearings that art creates and 'joins in shaping history' by 'founding' a sense of the world as a place in which we 'dwell'. Language is presented by Heidegger as such a 'dwelling place', and the realisation of such a 'truth', as is the case for Pound, makes poetry the site of revelation. This point is reinforced by Pound's synthetic manufacture, late in *The Cantos*, of the term *sagetrieb*, the compounded meanings of which encompass the compulsion to utter and a tradition of utterance or 'mythmaking' (saga-say / compulsion-instinct). Heidegger too would use *sage* as a compound of 'fable', 'say' and 'showing' - at a time historically coincident with Pound's coinage - when he desired to intimate the 'letting appear' that language, in 'its essence', performed.<sup>86</sup> As in Pater's reading of Wordsworth, Heidegger suggests that 'Genuinely poetic projection is the opening up or disclosure of that into which human being as historical is already cast'. In its ability to reveal and preserve the 'being' of human existence, poetry becomes the place where true history is disclosed; Heidegger writes 'Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history'.<sup>87</sup>

As has been shown, Pound habitually takes or anticipates aspects of critical thinking upon aesthetics and translates them into 'literal' programmes and practices. Unlike Pound, Heidegger himself would raise fundamental questions about the role of art in his own thinking, asking if in attending to it we merely 'appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past' or heed 'the nature of the origin' of all being? ('Origin of the Work of Art', p. 78). Despite the fact that Pound and Heidegger were contemporaries, neither appears to have known the other's work, or would have had much intellectual sympathy if they had. What is notable, however, is that their thinking upon the way in which art can be seen to 'ground' history is compatible with revolutionary but specifically fascist political allegiances. This allegiance can be pinned down in Heidegger's thinking to a move between the artwork and politics which Pound's project also hinges upon, for if 'truth' and 'history' can be established in the 'work' of art, Heidegger suggests that 'Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state' ('Origin of the Work of Art', p. 62).

That exactly such a 'founding' was promised by the radical historical break that fascism performed for both Pound and Heidegger is apparent. What a parallel with Heidegger's thinking helps draw out is the specific relationship between Pound's *paideuma* and such an 'aestheticised' sense of foundation.

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86. See *The Cantos* p. 557 (for a more overt use of the term to denote a tradition of aesthetic 'revelation' see p. 605), Heidegger 'A Dialogue On Language (Between a Japanese and an Inquirer)', in *On The Way To Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 1-54, p. 47, and Rabaté's own translation of this text and discussion of the proximity between Pound and Heidegger's terms in *Language, Sexuality and Ideology*, pp. 276-8.

87. 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 50, p. 68, p. 75 and p. 77; the analogy of the 'bridge' is taken from the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in the same volume, pp. 145-161, p. 154.

This parallel arises starkly when Heidegger proposes a Greek temple as an example of an artwork bringing a 'world' into being. He writes: the 'precinct' of the temple emerges through 'The temple-work' which 'opens up a world', and the statue of the god or deity within it becomes - in that the temple 'deconceals' the god - not a representation but that which 'lets the god himself be present and thus *is* the god himself' ('Origin of the Work of Art', p. 42-3). It is significant that both Pound and Heidegger have recourse to 'mythic' analogies to convey their premiss that the artwork discloses the ground of being in the world. Pound's *paideuma* does not wish to interrogate an idea of Being in the philosophically abstract sense, however, but of virtuous being in history, and so the example of the temple as the potent site of a radical artwork would appear in *The Cantos* as a specifically historical configuration. This occurs in canto VIII, *in medias res* and with apparent arbitrariness, with the introduction of Sigismundo Malatesta - a *virtuoso* figure that Pound would later describe as 'volitionist', 'factive' and 'an entire man' (*Guide to Kulchur*, p. 194).

Pound's use of Malatesta is considered, for he had an appropriately Machiavellian career as a professional soldier, mercenary and opportunist, becoming the embattled 'prince' of the city-state of Rimini during the power struggles of fifteenth-century Italy. It is as a personified marriage of Machiavellian virtuosity and artistic patronage that Malatesta signifies most strongly in Pound's poem, however, and it is through him that the theme of a *virtuous* fusion of politics and art in history enters *The Cantos*.

Malatesta is produced by Pound at the time when 'he began building the TEMPIO' (*Cantos*, p. 35), or the *Tempio Malatestiano* erected for his mistress Isotta (who will become, as the next chapter will illustrate, the 'deity' of the *Tempio*'s artwork in the Heideggerian sense by virtue of the 'aesthetic' powers she focuses). The *Tempio*, which was never completed, is adorned with sculpture and art executed by various and celebrated Renaissance artists:

... Sigismundo Malatesta  
 Lord of Ariminum, marble, porphyry, serpentine,  
 Whose men, Sigismundo's, came with more than an hundred  
 two wheeled ox carts and deported, for the beautifying  
 of the *tempio* where was Santa Maria in Trivio  
 Where the same are now on the walls...

"and built a temple so full of pagan works"

i. e. Sigismund

and in the style "Past ruin'd Latium"

The filigree hiding the gothic,

with a touch of rhetoric in the whole

And the old sarcophagi,

such as lie, smothered by grass, by San Vitale.

(*Cantos*, p. 36 and p. 41)



The *Tempio* was, as Pound relates, adorned with what Pope Pius II (who was to excommunicate and burn in effigy the rebellious Malatesta) had labelled 'pagan works', and would thus speak 'below the voice of his age's convention' in ways that Pound would endorse. Moreover, the *Tempio* was erected upon the old site of the gothic church of Santa Maria, and its façade literally enclosed this structure and remodelled it in marble. But this is a site which is actually stratified by artworks. Formerly, a temple to Venus was reputed to have stood upon it, and the mythic and classical representations that Malatesta commissioned reflect this embedding of historically 'deconcealed' cultures. Through such embedding Malatesta becomes an archetype of the artist who approaches the material of art in order to elicit a 'repressed' shape already there ('The god is inside the stone') or re-activate a prior artwork 'That hath the light of the doer, as it were / a form cleaving to it'.<sup>88</sup> The materials and structure of the *Tempio* contain echoes of other cultural and historical styles just as its discrete chapels catalogue a range of human activity (it contains 'sacred' precincts as well as chapels of astrology and the arts). Literally 'holding' or 'discriminating' other artistic 'virtues' and cosmologies about or within itself, the *Tempio* becomes for Pound a synthesis of histories and beliefs 'performed' or revealed by the artwork - as Pound had earlier proclaimed of such a site, 'Ply over ply of life still wraps the earth here' ('Three Cantos II', p. 182).

In the Malatesta cantos Pound acts as the *virtuous* artist whose own artistry must now 'discern and allow for a particular *virtù* in others' by holding the details of the *Tempio* 'in orderly arrangement' within his own work. If Malatestan *virtù* is evidenced in the historical complex of the *Tempio*, then Pound's own must emerge from the 'erection of the microcosmos' that is the Malatesta cantos. Here the historical document proper is incorporated into the poem for the first time. Transcriptions of fifteenth-century manuscript and letter-fragments from Malatesta's intercepted 'post bag' (*Cantos*, p. 41) which Pound inserts directly into his 'poem that includes history' show, as it were, history becoming *active* as art; the personal document becomes authenticated not in the context of history, but in the context of art according to such a procedure. Here then, Pound presents artefacts rather than 'opinion', and such documents become 'luminous details' of a de-authorised history presented 'without comment' - it being Pound's turn, as *virtuoso* organiser of an artwork to observe the Malatestan maxim of 'Tempus

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88. Quotations are taken from 'Cavalcanti', p. 152, where Pound elaborates the idea that 'the god is inside the statue', and *The Cantos*, p. 251; Pound follows these last two lines with a Latin declaration that such disclosure is a 'godlike' act. For an early exploration of the idea of latency of form in Pound's thinking see Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), especially chapter 12.

loquendi, / Tempus tacendi' (a time for speech and a time for silence; *Cantos*, p. 153) and withdraw in order to allow the artwork to 'present' itself and perform.

As Pound would declare at the opening of 'Three Cantos', the 'truth / Is *inside* this discourse...' ('Three Cantos I, p. 113, emphasis added), and in the Malatesta cantos he presents the way in which such truth could proclaim itself through the radical artwork and the virtuous practice which rediscovers such a historical 'design'. Thus Pound stands to *The Cantos* as does Malatesta to the *Tempio*, both being 'founders' of a de-authorised aesthetic order, or 'founders, gazing at the mounts of their cities' (*Cantos*, p. 69).

This chapter has treated the various ways in which Pound's programme systematically subverts the logic of authority, and thus clears a space in which an 'outlaw' aesthetics and artifice can 'found' what is a newly designed, yet also archaic and suppressed, cultural history. One of the goals of Pound's project is to map a design in which the elision of the difference between art and the 'vital' can occur. That the 'de-authorising' strategies of this project chart a passage into politically ambivalent areas - in which clear critical evaluation of Pound's modernism becomes problematic - is evident; indeed, it is the exploitation of a double-edge in his thinking, or the following of radical trajectories which terminate in an alternative but unknowable 'order', which describes the politics of his programme. The next chapter will follow the 'ambivalent' principles of Pound's aesthetics into some of the 'details' which ground his project, and attend to the way that they translate into a de-authorised metaphysics of the divine, and a metamorphic conception of language.



## 2. Pound: The Aesthetics and Poetics of De-Authorisation

In Poundian aesthetics, art does not represent the real but 'founds' it, and does so through processes whose actions and effects violate authoritative narratives of history, knowledge, politics and morality as modernity understands them. That the authority of the author remains a problem in this conception of the function of the aesthetic does not burden Pound's conscience overmuch, as he considered his own *virtù* to inhere in the didactic rearticulation and revelation of culture to itself through artistic 'design'. Indeed, the problematics of the self in its relation to the material it organises and mediates would be negotiated late in 1915, only to be discarded, in the first of the 'Three Cantos'. This canto remains a nexus of important Poundian concerns, however, and a consideration of it will open other paths into Pound's aesthetics.

'Three Cantos I' would approach the difficulties of the modern 'epic' poet's reconstructive vision of history through a dialogue with Robert Browning. The earlier poet's *Sordello* had attempted the recreation of the world of a long dead troubadour poet by proceeding through the voice of a narrator who presented the 'life' of Sordello as if he were a showman at a fair. *Sordello*'s narrator declares, 'A story I could body forth so well / By making speak, myself kept out of view, / The very man as he was wont to do...', and regrets that it is he who must 'tell' the story and attempt to 'catch[...] the dead'.<sup>1</sup> The subtext of these lines is that the author / narrator *necessarily* usurps the place of the historical subject in such a reconstruction, and as the narrator and subject of *Sordello* become increasingly interfused, Browning's loss of 'objectivity' becomes an ironic comment upon the general unavailability of an 'impersonal' presentation of the past. Pound would praise and emulate Browning's use of the 'mask', but he would especially applaud the creative construction of the past that featured in *Sordello*, and 'Three Cantos' would accordingly celebrate the historical inconsistencies of its precursor poem:

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1. See *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, volume 1, edited by Augustine Birrell (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1899), p. 115.

... half your dates are out, you mix your eras;  
For that great font Sordello sat beside -  
'Tis an immortal passage, but the font? -  
Is some two centuries outside the picture.<sup>2</sup>

'Does it matter?' the poem immediately asks after these lines, and replies 'Not in the least. Ghosts move about me / Patched with histories'.

What Pound is attempting to establish here is a modern approach to history and its 'vital' reconstruction which *foregrounds* the mediating and creative function of the author. What matters is not the accuracy of the scenario, but the ability of the contemporary to select relevant details from the past and integrate or translate them into the 'design' of the present. Such history can *only be*, and presents itself unashamedly as, an aesthetic 'making' in the Poundian sense, and exists as a projection or extension of the 'life' of the modern artist:

... what were the use  
Of setting figures up and breathing life  
upon them,  
Were 't not *our* life, your life, my life,  
extended?  
I walk Verona. (I am here in England.)  
I see Can Grande. (Can see whom you will.)<sup>3</sup>

Pound suggests that his own historical project will depend upon the artist entering and 'breathing life' into history's figures and locales, but he is initially troubled by the insubstantiality and fragmentariness of his material ('Ghosts move about me / Patched with histories') and contrasts the scope of his own endeavour to Browning's:

You had one whole man?  
And I have many fragments, less worth? Less worth?  
Ah, had you quite my age, quite such a beastly and  
cantankerous age?  
You had some basis, had some set belief. (p. 115)

The absence of 'set belief' is, however, not a handicap to Pound's project but its (uncertain) ground. The first of the 'Three Cantos' issues as an exchange between a Poundian modern and a prior attempt to dramatise history, and conventionally stresses the fragmentation and 'uncertainty' of modernity. Such uncertainty does not merely describe a difference between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

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2. 'Three Cantos I', p. 114. In *Gaudier Brzeska* Pound would declare that 'Browning's "Sordello" is one of the finest *masks* ever presented'(p. 86).

3. 'Three Cantos', p. 115. This orientation towards history is exemplified best in Pound's 'creative' approach to translation; of *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, for instance, he would insist 'That there was never any question of translation, let alone literal translation. My job was to bring a dead man to life, to present a living figure' (*Letters*, pp. 148-9), and in *Gaudier-Brzeska* he would declare that 'Our respect is not for the subject-matter, but for the creative power of the artist; for that which he is capable of adding to his subject from himself; or, in fact, his capability to dispense with external subjects all together, to create from himself or from elements' (p. 98).



however, but hints at Pound's own desire to write a poem - no less than a modern epic - whose metaphysical basis will itself 'bear' uncertainties of belief. That such a lack of foundation must now comprise the *integrity* of modern art Pound would make clear later through an attack upon the 'unfounded assumptions' of certain co-modernists that

... some form of Christianity or monotheism were the sole alternative to irreligion; and as if monism or monotheism were anything more than an hypothesis agreeable to certain types of very lazy mind too weak to bear an uncertainty or to remain in "uncertainty".<sup>4</sup>

Browning's poem participates in 'uncertainty' for Pound to the extent that the past is produced as an aspect of the artist's own 'intensest life' which alone can aspire 'To paint, more real than any dead Sordello' (p. 114). Likewise, Pound's own 'reinvigoration' of the past will be a 'montage' of historical 'intensities' as experienced by the contemporary poet. Such intensities begin to punctuate 'Three Cantos' in the form of apparently 'immediate' observations of an environment made by the poem's narrator, but it is a 'mythic' or 'metamorphic' environment replete with 'signs' of gods that is presented - 'the place is full of spirits'; 'Light on the air. / Are they Etruscan gods?' (p. 116). As the poem progresses the substantiality and immediacy of such visions and not their 'ghost'-like existence becomes stressed:

And the place is full of spirits.  
Not *lemures*, not dark and shadowy ghosts,  
But the ancient living, wood-white,  
Smooth as the inner bark, and firm of aspect,  
And all agleam with colors - no, not agleam,  
But colored like the lake and like the olive leaves...(p. 116)

The staged suppression of the archaic adverb 'agleam' invokes the Imagist principle of avoiding 'excess' in literary signification, and reinforces the tenet that 'the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol' ('A Retrospect', p. 5) by blurring the distinction between the 'living' spirits and the natural 'object' or environment. Here the poet's visions aspire to become aspects of the real, signs of a fluid interconnection between the external world and a 'germinal' consciousness which follows 'the clue of a visionary interpretation' (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 90). Eventually the canto's engagement with Browning ends with a statement of the veracity of its own de-lyricised approach to a 'visionary' aesthetics:

"The lyre should animate but not mislead the pen" -  
That's Wordsworth, Mr. Browning. (What a phrase! -  
That lyre, that pen, that bleating sheep, Will Wordsworth!)  
That should have taught you avoid speech figurative  
And set out your matter  
As I do, in straight simple phrases:  
Gods float in the azure air,

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4. 'Dr Williams' Position', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 389-398, p. 394.

Bright gods, and Tuscan, back before dew was shed... (p. 118)

Despite the apparent meditation upon the simultaneous priority and 'uncertainty' of the self that the poem has thematised so far, suddenly a 'figured' and subject-centred speech (the lyric) is derogated in favour of a 'figured' or metamorphic reality in which gods, like the sense of culture, order and *sagetrieb* which Pound aspired to promote, are both 'in the air' and 'present' - for 'we have that world about us'.<sup>5</sup> The programmatic suppression of the 'distractions' of lyricism in favour of a metamorphic 'real' is consolidated between the final line of this canto and the first line of 'Three Cantos II' - 'O Casella!' and 'Leave Casella'. Here a parallel is being drawn between the modern poet's project and Dante's journey in the *Commedia*, where Casella features as a musician that delays the mediaeval poet. Cato must urge Dante onward to 'Run to the mountain and strip the outer skin / Which stops God being manifest to you'.<sup>6</sup> The 'straight simple phrases' which follow this initial renunciation of the 'lyre' dogmatically assert the manifestation of gods in the fabric of reality, and they would reappear, unencumbered by Pound's negotiation of their substance, in the opening of the published canto III.

This eschewal of 'lyric' opens a window onto a central, and overtly 'authoritarian economy' in Pound's writing - the suppression or castigation of the 'excess' in certain modes of signification that announces the authority of the contemporary modernist 'word'. Here Pound's programme is in accord with the general modernist dictum that 'all genuine literature is the effort to escape from literariness'.<sup>7</sup> It is, however, in his own particularly intense and idiosyncratic polemics against the 'literary' that his language collapses most readily into the metaphors of authority that he avoids so studiously elsewhere - 'when words cease to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish' (*Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 114). As this statement suggests, Pound's own authoritarianism resides most strongly in this desire to harness words to 'things', but, as 'Three Cantos' continue to assert, a crucial term in this equation is the problematisation of the nature of the 'thing' and of the 'real' itself as they are refracted through a de-authorised aesthetics.

It is not until near the end of 'Three Cantos I' that any justification of the speaker's 'visionary interpretation' of the real is attempted. Here a distinction between an imaginatively elaborated environment and a figured 'real' is implicitly posited - the former being disavowed as the *phantastik*

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5. *Guide To Kulchur*, p. 57, and 'Three Cantos', p. 118.

6. See 'Three Cantos I', p. 121, 'Three Cantos II', p. 180, and Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, translated by C. H. Sisson (London and Sydney: Pan Books, 1980), p. 207 (Purgatorio II, lines 122-3).

7. I take this phrase from Louis Menand's discussion of the generally pejorative sense of the 'literary' for modernism in *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and his Context* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 66.





Moreover, the source of the divine as 'Three Cantos' present it is grounded not only in the form of a particular woman, but in the energised and affirming 'assertion of a positive' as Pound conceives it: that is, as an aesthetic configuration 'of desire'. This is clarified by the final lines of the passage ('Behold, I say, she comes...') for Shakespeare's *Pericles* would transform the daughter of King Antiochus into an emergent goddess (Spring) by describing her entry as such in the play-text; indeed, she has no other identity in the play, and is nameless in its *dramatis personae*, for her character is inscribed *only* in terms of a locus of sexual desire.<sup>9</sup> The earlier metamorphic environment of 'Three Cantos' was also a subtly sexualised one:

... we have that world about us...  
And the water is full of silvery almond-white swimmers,  
The silvery water glazes the up-turned nipple. (pp. 118-9)

For Pound the daughter of Antiochus *is* desire, and so *is* a goddess, just as Botticelli's Venus has her origin and significance in the 'actual' beauty of Simonetta (and Ignez, beloved of Pedro, can claim her place in myth with Proserpine). By extension, the artistic perception of the landscape ('real' or 'projected') is of an environment saturated and transformed by 'positive' energies whose sources seem to be cognate with sexual desire. As in the mythic environment posited by *The Spirit of Romance* a world of fluid interaction and intercourse between bodies and a metaphorically 'figured' real apparently holds. More specifically, in 'Three Cantos' the real is saturated by the poet's 'positive' reconstructive vision *underwritten* by desire as it has been chronicled in a textual tradition, as *The Cantos* proper would clarify when the 'almond-white swimmers' reappear in slightly altered form with the addition of the phrase 'As Poggio has remarked'.<sup>10</sup>

In the filtering of desire as an 'outlawed' energy through a classical (if, in Pound's view, similarly 'outlawed') pantheon a condensed image of Pound's politically ambivalent poetics presents itself. Moreover, the implications of his configuration of desire as the 'assertion of a positive' ramify within specific critical areas and disclose other aspects of his thinking which potentially 'straddle' tensions in critical evaluation, and this can be seen most clearly within a psychoanalytic frame.

Although he had little sympathy with Freudian theory, Pound would apparently borrow and modify a term used by Freud's translators - 'Thanatos' or the 'death-drive' - in order to describe the energies of

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9. She is the daughter *and* wife of Antiochus in that their relationship is incestuous, and she is also desired by Pericles, who suffers banishment when he guesses the riddle posed by Antiochus which describes the nature of their relationship; the line that Pound cites is from *Pericles*, I, i, lines 12-13 (see *William Shakespeare, The Complete Works*, edited by Peter Alexander [London and Glasgow: Collins, 1971], p. 1240).

10. Poggio was the Renaissance 'rediscoverer' of lost classics - see *The Cantos*, p. 11 and Terrell's *Companion to the Cantos*, p. 9.



the outlaw tradition which his project sought to recover. This tradition looked both to 'the margins of history' and the classics for its progenitors, but Pound would insist that even in the case of the classic authors with 'their so highly specialised culture' these writers spoke to him 'of a part of life as I know it. ATHANATOS.'<sup>11</sup> The essay from which this statement is drawn originally appeared as the preface to the *Active Anthology* of 1933, and the emphasis on 'action' is appropriate as the term 'ATHANATOS' connotes a 'positive' sexual energy, as against the predominantly 'negative' configuration of libidinal drives as they appear in the popularly received schema of Freudian theory. Broadly, for Freud, the sexual impulse was indissociable from a primal and irrational urge towards self-dissolution and death which could be overcome only through the dialectic between itself and a (rationalising) 'life-instinct'. In Freud's terms, this libidinal drive generated 'the instinctual repression upon which is based all that is most precious in human civilization', resulting in a 'struggle between Eros and Death [Thanatos]' where sexuality is central to what can be seen as a general pathology of desire.<sup>12</sup>

That Pound's term 'ATHANATOS' explicitly denies such a 'negative' or repressive conception of the function of sexuality in cultural history is apparent. If desire as the 'assertion of a positive' in his thinking is followed further into psychoanalytic theory, moreover, it must be seen as a refusal of conceptions of desire which designate it as a 'drive' given form by authority and negation. That is, that the assertion of desire as a positive denies the Freudian 'Oedipal' apparatus which considers the socialisation of the subject to take place through the experience of the father as 'the source of all authority'<sup>13</sup> - an authority which forces a separation from the mother and produces individuation by threatening castration - for in this drama the subject enters a system governed by the systematic repression of desire and the fear of 'absence' (of the penis).

More recently Jacques Lacan has incorporated the insights of structural linguistics into this Freudian scheme and presented the 'symbolic' order of language as the matrix into which the subject, deprived of the pre-Oedipal undifferentiation between self-and-mother (who now, like language, becomes Other) is cast and hence constituted. It is the entry into the symbolic which institutes a 'split' in the subject, a break which brings the unconscious into being and articulates a subject for whom, as

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11. 'Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 359-70, p. 360.

12. Quotations are taken from Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, translated by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 275-338, p. 315, and *Civilization and its Discontents*, translated by James Strachey (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1961), p. 69.

13. I take this phrase from Elizabeth Wright's description of the 'Oedipus Complex' in *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 14.

a signifier within a language functioning by 'difference', not the signified but only the 'symbol' is available. Lacan writes that 'the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, and this death constitutes in the subject the eternalisation of his desire'.<sup>14</sup> It is thus 'otherness' and 'lack' which generates the processes of desire and the deferrals of 'the signifying chain' of speech, and these traverse and constitute a precarious but authorised subjectivity in an order whose authority and law are 'supported' and governed by the 'name of the father'.<sup>15</sup>

As has already been suggested, Pound's project opens itself readily to critiques from psychoanalytic perspectives,<sup>16</sup> and this is particularly true of more recent theories which take desire to be the product of both 'lack' and linguistic 'deferral' as they constitute the writing subject. However, Pound's own thinking upon desire can be seen to anticipate a different trajectory in psychoanalytic theory, one which specifically presents it as a de-authorising and 'positive' force which constantly subverts 'negative' mappings of its movements and function. This trajectory emerges most forcefully in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose *Anti-Oedipus* challenges the precepts of Freudian psychoanalysis by insisting that desire is a process whose 'intrinsic power' lies in its 'ability to create its own object'. In other words, they insist that desire, its drives, and its 'fantasies', exist as a basic psychic *production* which is mis-represented by theory when a specific object (the mother, the phallus, the Oedipally-constituted family) is presented as its 'goal'. Deleuze and Guattari come to dissolve the dichotomies between a (repressed) unconscious and a (governing) ego, a (desiring) subject and a (symbolic) order of language, a (libidinal) fantasy and an (always compromised) 'reality' by presenting desire as that which directly produces the real:

If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing...<sup>17</sup>

Pound's insistence that poetry is 'the assertion of a positive... of desire' can be seen to prefigure, while concurrently imposing a mythic pantheon upon, this radical departure from the paradigms of

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14. Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language', in *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980), pp. 30-113, p. 104.

15. For the idea of desire and language as processes constituted by 'lack' see Lacan, 'The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power' in *Écrits*, pp. 226-80, p. 263; on the function of the Name of the Father see 'The Function and Field of Speech...', p. 67 and Malcolm Bowie's commentary in *Lacan* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), pp. 108-9.

16. See chapter 1, note 7.

17. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), pp. 25-6.



psychoanalysis. His configuration of the aestheticised subject as an 'interactive' nexus of energies, and his presentation of the environment as a (sexually) cathected site of metamorphic energy (or 'fluid force') suggests the syntheses of 'partial objects, flows, and bodies' which would be central to this later 'anti-oedipal' repudiation of established models of the psyche, the subject, and the 'real'.

Pound and later psychoanalytic theories are in accord in their approach to language as a *material* or constitutive psycho-social ground. While for Lacan language and its figures articulate a 'symbolic' subject for whom the 'signified' is never available, and for Deleuze and Guattari the languages of desire denote processes of which 'The real is the end product', each affirm a 'figural' of the psycho-social which Pound's programme, albeit in a markedly textual form, had also stressed. For Deleuze and Guattari as opposed to Lacan, however, the psycho-social 'real' is *not* symbolic - any 'split' that the entry into language institutes is overridden by desiring-production, and Pound's strictures against the symbol can be seen to anticipate such a revision. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Pound refuses the idea of a legislated desire or a relation to language which is determined or mediated by a 'split', a 'lack', or, in more Poundian terms, a precedent authority. The 'gods' can be neither an ornament of 'lyric' nor 'symbolic' in the context and environment of 'Three Cantos', for symbols deal in 'association' or a mode of signification that is 'almost... allegory' (*Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 84). The allegorical nature of the symbol, for Pound, presupposes that there is something *prior* to it which determines its signification - that which it merely represents or augments. For Pound there is only a de-authorised identity and immediacy operating in the 'vital' artwork and the *sagetrieb* of its 'athanatic' productions:

And the "new form." What is it? ... It is not an empty copy of empty Roman allegories that are themselves copies of copies. It is not a mimicry of external life. It is energy cut into stone...

Whatever force there may be in our own decade and vortex is... a search for a certain precision; in a refusal to define things in the terms of something else; in the "primary pigment"... We seek for a lost reality and a lost intensity.<sup>18</sup>

When the real is founded, and emerges through, the forms of art and an aesthetics of desire, a different kind of 'intelligence' and different 'movements' of the mind are operational - as *The Cantos* insist:

Form, forms and renewal, gods held in the air,  
Forms seen, and then clearness,  
Bright void, without image, Napishtim,  
Casting his gods back into the [*nous*].

"as the sculptor sees the form in the air..."

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18. *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 110 and p. 117. Pound's search for an 'intensity' that is not 'allegorical' has a strong literary lineage; see for example the anti-allegorical configured as 'vision' in the work of William Blake, and 'symbol' in the writings of Coleridge as noted by George Bornstein in *The Postromantic Consciousness of Ezra Pound* (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1977), pp. 55-6 and note on pp. 81-2.



"as glass seen under water,  
"King Otreus, my father...  
and saw the waves taking form as crystal,  
notes as facets of air,  
and the mind there, before them, moving,  
so that notes needed not move.<sup>19</sup>

For Pound, desire in the language of art is not a representation but an 'intensity' or 'equation' which can 'cause form to come into being' (*Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 92). What must be noticed here is that the radical or utopian gesture that Pound's conception of the 'language' of art makes might now be seen, as the subtitle of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* intimates, as a move into a poetics of *psychosis* - or a mode of subjectivity accountable only to an 'aesthetics' of the real. Baudrillard seems to approach Pound's desired condition of language directly when he writes that

The schizophrenic is not, as generally claimed, characterised by his loss of touch with reality, but by the absolute proximity to and total instantaneousness with things, this overexposure to the transparency of the world.<sup>20</sup>

If Pound's conception of desire meshes with the paradigms of psychoanalysis, then, it apparently meshes with them anti-Oedipally - that is, that only a de-authorised psychoanalytic paradigm underwrites Pound's conceptions of art, signification and desire in the *sagetrieb*. Thus desire as 'a positive' might be seen to specifically lift the restraints placed upon the unauthorised and psychotic 'phantasies' of art that Freud warned against (in his essay 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming') in exactly the same spirit that Plato's republic was de-authorised by Pound's 'founding' aesthetics; Freud writes:

If phantasies become over-luxuriant and over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis. Phantasies, moreover, are the immediate mental precursors of the distressing symptoms complained of by our patients. Here a broad by-path branches off into pathology.<sup>21</sup>

For Pound 'presences', metaphorically translated into the environment and underwritten by desire, become material effects and aspects of the real, and the distinction between desire and the real dissolves as language becomes, as in its 'fantastic' anti-Oedipal form, the medium of a heretofore unauthorised metamorphosis and emergence.

However, desire is also the site of an 'authoritarian control which fashions the aesthetic as a 'compound between freedom and order' for Pound. This can be focused if the movement of 'Three

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19. *The Cantos*, p. 119; the relation between the aesthetic and desire in this passage is enforced by the line "King Otreus, my father", for Aphrodite claimed that Otreus was her father when seducing Anchises (a union which, perhaps significantly, pre-dates Roman authority, because Aeneas was born from it; see also note 46 below).

20. Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, translated by Bernard and Caroline Schutze, edited by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), p. 27.

21. Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', in *Art and Literature: Jensen's 'Gradiva', Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works*, translated by James Strachey, edited by Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 131-41, p. 136.



Cantos I' is again briefly considered. As the dialogue with Browning fades from the poem the legitimacy of Pound's projected reconstruction of history comes to rest upon a vision of the world as an artwork which refuses to abstract itself from the specific figures (Simonetta), 'simple phrases', 'natural objects' or movements of desire which both motivate and are transformed by it. As has been seen, one of the major 'economic' goals of Pound's programme is the recovery or realisation of a language in which 'words' or 'poetry' live again 'close to the thing'; until this occurs, Pound writes, poetry will remain 'balderdash - a sort of embroidery for dilettantes and women' ('Osiris', p. 41). In this way Pound presents a refusal of 'abstraction'. His insistence on the particular is encoded in his endlessly restated claim that 'Language is made out of concrete things', just as it is in his repudiation of a Western philosophical tradition whose idealist definitions he considered to move from 'the simple things' into 'a region of remoter and progressively remoter abstraction'. This same refusal of abstraction would underwrite the tenets of an economics in which usury's ability to create value 'out of nothing', or in abstraction from 'natural' abundance and wealth, would become one of the main motives behind his anti-semitism.<sup>22</sup>

As these observations upon Poundian 'economies' imply, Pound's eschewal of the abstract feeds into his politics in specific and disturbing ways. This is apparent in his construction and manipulation of the idea of the 'Semitic', but it is more appropriate to the present discussion to approach this issue through the related construction of the 'female' (in *The Cantos* Pound writes of the 'intravaginal warmth of / hebrew affections', pp. 172-3).

Within Pound's 'outlaw' tradition, as the 'Igne' episode (Pedro exhumes the tangible *body* of Ignez), Malatesta's building of the *Tempio* for Isotta and the appearance of the divine through the 'artwork' that Botticelli performs upon Simonetta suggest, the virtuous activity of both artist and artwork are themselves *produced* for Pound by the simultaneous specificity and inertness of the female as the material of artworks, or the sequestration of the feminine as the locus of potential and desires which art must both articulate and 'order'. As will be seen shortly, Pound returned to a Provençal tradition of 'courtly' poetry in order to recover an aesthetic in which the lady was figured as both the source of desire and a *virtù* which existed as a potent but only secondary quality of the female herself - it would

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22. Quotations are taken from *Letters*, p. 49, *ABC of Reading*, p. 19 and *The Cantos*, p. 233. For a discussion of Pound's aversity to abstraction in its specific relation to his politics and economics see Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons*, especially chapter 2.



ultimately be the gaze of the poet which had the power to bestow *virtù* upon the desired object.<sup>23</sup> In the amalgam of biological and aesthetic theory which informs Pound's introduction to Rémy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love* the idea of 'Woman' as 'the conservator' or the 'retentive media' which the active male sperm animates would be elaborated, and these ideas would be given archetypal expression early in *The Cantos* when Danaë was transposed to the city of Ecbatan to open herself to the golden semen of Zeus as 'The bride awaiting the god's touch'.<sup>24</sup>

As these instances imply, while sexuality itself functions as a 'positive' element in Pound's thinking, it exists *at the same time* as that potentially perverse and destructive power which must be controlled. This is apparent in the litany of desire *and* destruction in synthesis that features in the allusions of canto IV. The 'rape' of Troy in Helen's name, the violation and mutilation of Philomel by Tereus, Actaeon's transformation and death at the hands of Diana, and various 'savage' episodes from the lives of the troubadours are gathered to attest to 'the overpowering force of passion, its power to transform (metamorphosis) and its potential for destruction'.<sup>25</sup> While desire and, specifically, desire for the female, denotes transgressive energies which announce the 'positive', productive and affirmative qualities of the artwork, then, the feminine is, simultaneously, a passive or merely retentive construct and the locus of the disorder and chaos which threatens to destabilise or brutalise the poet's 'new civilization'. Many of Pound's descriptions of aesthetic 'activity' thus offer themselves to gendered readings in which the virile artist negotiates both the 'beauty' and 'chaos' of a feminised environment:

... a man hurling himself at an indomitable chaos, and yanking and hauling as much of it as possible into some sort of order (or beauty), aware of it both as chaos and as potential. ('Dr Williams' Position', p. 396).

Ultimately, the energised and anarchic forces of sexuality will provide both the subversive impulse of Pound's programme (resulting in a de-authorised or 'psychotic' aesthetics of metamorphosis) and the most despotic of its economies (a ubiquity in his writing of an opposition between the feminine and a male or phallic principle).<sup>26</sup> The dominance of the phallus as a 'principle' in Pound's project, moreover, reveals an intensely orthodox conformity to the psychoanalytic premiss of 'lack' which his writing

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23. See the discussion of *virtù* in *Translations*, p. 18 and the line from Guido Cavalcanti's Ballata V which Pound uses to illustrate it: '... "Look well! For if thou look on her, / Then shalt thou see her virtue risen in heaven."' (p. 174)

24. See Rémy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love*, translated and introduced by Ezra Pound (London: Neville Spearman, 1957), p. xvi and p. xvii, and *The Cantos*, p. 17. Such examples, inside and outside Pound's texts, could be continued - when Hilda Doolittle presented a poem of her own to the young Pound, for instance, he characteristically responded with the pronouncement "'You are a poem, though your poem's naught'" (see H. D., *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound*, edited by Norman H. Pearson and Michael King [New York: New Directions, 1979], p. 12).

25. I take this phrase from Edward Larrissy's reading of this canto in *Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry: The Language of Gender and Objects* (Oxford and Cambridge Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 41.

26. On this opposition see Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons*, p. 26.



supposedly eschews, and phallic 'presence' recovers and authorises the 'flows' of desire whose diversity and productivity, in other ways, he so wilfully promotes. In Lacanian terms, the phallus becomes the 'privileged signifier' for Pound - that whose authority anchors signifier to signified in the movements of language and desire and ensures that his texts acquire, in a fundamental sense, the authority of discourse.<sup>27</sup>

As has been stressed, however, Pound's programme is stratified by such 'ambivalence', and this can be seen even in his most reductive confluences of 'artistic' and sexual or biological processes:

... the phallus or spermatozoid charging, head-on, the female chaos... Even oneself has felt it, driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London, a sensation analogous to the male feeling in copulation. (*Natural Philosophy of Love*, p. viii)

Here the female is demoted to a 'chaos', or at best a mere potential in the face of the actively organising and fertilising phallus. At the same time, however, the symbolic ground of authority - the city - itself remains a passivity or field which must be penetrated and 'ordered' by artistic endeavour. As so often in Pound, a radical de-authorisation occurs in order that a 'feminised' city can be 'relocated' and presented as an effect of the artist and artwork - as in the poem 'N.Y.':

My city, my beloved,  
Thou art a maid with no breasts,  
Thou art slender as a silver reed.  
Listen to me, attend me!  
And I will breathe into thee a soul,  
And thou shall live for ever. (*Shorter Poems*, p. 62)

Nevertheless, the antagonism between aesthetics and authority, however crudely, continues to generate tensions and contradictions in the politics of Pound's aesthetics even as his most authoritarian dichotomies prosper. Again, this might be seen as an effect of the aesthetic itself insofar as desire is contained not under the 'name of the father' for Pound, but under the aegis of the 'positively' charged because 'outlawed' phallus of the artist. The narrowness of Pound's 'phallic' aesthetics will be clarified in chapter four through a comparison with the 'renegotiated' field of the aesthetic according to Joyce. Having outlined these tensions and paradoxes in Pound's thinking, his project can be elaborated by attending to the specific way in which he presents sexual desire and its 'figures' as the foundation of belief and a refusal of authority's orthodox forms.

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27. In 'The Signification of the Phallus' Lacan would state that 'The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire' (*Écrits*, pp. 281-91, p. 287); in other words, at the same time that Pound celebrates the fracturing (of the subject, of the real) that the movements of desire and desire-in-language instigate, he also uses authoritarian means to *deny* this fracture.

## The De-authorised 'Figure' of the Divine

Pound's antipathy to authority is nowhere more evident than in his metaphysics. Rather than conceiving religion as a ritualised deference before the authority of a higher or extrinsic power he would see in its early, 'outlawed' or 'aesthetic' forms, an essentially materialist expression of human productivity grounded in sexual energy. As has been shown, references to mythic embodiments of sexual love and 'natural' fecundity (Aphrodite, Venus, Persephone) stratify his writing. Again, the primal source of such 'personifications' must be traced to a paganism which pre-dates 'Greek splitting', a 'Paganism, which at the base of its cosmogonic philosophy set the sexual phenomena whereby Life perpetuates itself throughout the universe', and Pound would consider such a sexualised base as a 'rock bed' from which his metaphysics could proceed.<sup>28</sup>

As his religious thinking followed 'materialist' paths, so his incursions into philosophy would look to the 'heretical' legacy of Neoplatonism for a materialist conception of productive energy, and he would eventually find this in the work of Scotus Erigena and Robert Grosseteste. Other 'marginal' philosophers would feature in Pound's tradition,<sup>29</sup> but in Grosseteste's conception of light as a pervasive radiation which tends 'to multiply and diffuse itself in all directions' he found a clear echo of his conception of 'pagan' sexual energy as an 'unauthorised' material force. Grosseteste implied the unity of creation and creator by locating in the physical world a generative energy usually ascribed a transcendent origin, and in the work of Erigena Pound would discern an analogous conception of light as energy which presented the natural world as 'one stupendous yet graded theophania'. Pound's eclectic but cumulative procedures would find confirmation of these views in the 'totalitarianism' of Confucian doctrine, which carried the idea of a 'total light process' by which 'The celestial and earthly process can be defined in a single phrase; its actions and its creations have no duality'.<sup>30</sup> The

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28. The quoted passage occurs in 'Terra Italica' (*Selected Prose*, pp. 54-60, p. 55) where Pound is actually citing the Italian writer Eduardo Tinto (for a discussion of this passage see Makin's *Provence and Pound*, pp. 245-7). The idea of Pound using pagan sexuality as a 'rock bed' for his thinking is taken from Leon Surette's *A Light From Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's "Cantos"* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 222; Surette's title in turn comes from Pound's declaration in 'Credo' of continuities between his own modernist project and the fertility rites of the ancient Greek cult at Eleusis: 'Given the material means I would replace the statue of Venus on the cliffs at Terracina. I would erect a temple to Artemis in Park Lane. I believe that a light from Eleusis persisted throughout the middle ages and set beauty in the song of Provence and of Italy' (*Selected Prose*, p. 53).

29. Plotinus, for instance, would lead Pound out of the dark of the 'Hell' cantos, and Richard of St. Victor would later provide the epigraph to canto XC whose theme is both the reality and triumph of love in the *sagetrieb*; see *The Cantos*, p. 66 and p. 605, and Clark Emery's discussion of the features of Pound's metaphysical canon in *Ideas Into Action: A Study of Pound's Cantos* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1958), pp. 11-18.

30. Quotations are taken respectively from Carroll F. Terrell's 'A Commentary on Grosseteste with an English Version of *De Luce*', *Paideuma*, 2, 1 (1973), pp. 449-62; p. 455, Peter Makin's 'Ezra Pound and Scotus Erigena', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 10, 1 (1973), pp. 60-83, p. 74, and *Confucius: The Great Digest, The Unwobbling Pivot, The Analects* (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 20 and p. 183.



metaphors of light which are so prevalent in Pound's writing always echo this metaphysics which shines only as a marginalised 'light from the borders' of established histories.

However, such metaphors of light function to describe a complex 'figurative' correspondence between an archaic metaphysics and modernity. In the heretical or 'mythical' method of historical recovery outlined in 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' Pound had requested that the reader 'regard what follows not as dogma, but as a metaphor which I find convenient to express certain relations' (p. 28); *The Spirit of Romance* had prefaced its discussion of myth - in what is a characteristic statement of its author's 'artifice' - with the announcement 'I have no dogma, but the figures may serve as an assistance to thought' (p. 94). The figure or the 'dogma' of metaphor, Pound hints, presents the only form of 'doctrine', 'dogma' or 'authority' which his aesthetics easily allow - 'one should agree', he insists, 'with the dogma of trope' ('The Wisdom of Poetry', p. 329).

Such a privileging of the rhetorical or tropic activity of language would be endorsed by a dictum drawn from the work of Ernest Fenollosa, who suggested that metaphor feels 'back along the ancient lines of advance'. Pound would clarify this statement by observing that such 'advances' still occur within a pre-established metaphoric field that the poet has recourse to 'in dealing with his own time',<sup>31</sup> and one of the most significant areas in which this double-movement occurs can be located in Pound's constant use of a scientific vocabulary which retains Neoplatonic overtones.

As has been noted, Pound's promotion of poetry as a 'conservation of energy' was drawn from a contemporary study which attempted to 'synthesize a scientific base for the procedures of literary criticism',<sup>32</sup> and Pound's own writing would consistently have recourse to such a synthesis. The 'germinal' condition of myth is presented by him as an 'interaction' of 'forces' and 'intensities', while references to technology, experiments in physics and energy transmission stress the physicality and materiality of the body and the medium it inhabits (*Spirit of Romance*, pp. 92-3). Elsewhere the 'luminous details' of history are described as a 'switchboard' which 'governs' an energy circuit, and at this point the governing metaphor of Pound's project becomes the 'scientised' Vortex as words become 'charged' cones 'radiating a force' ('Osiris', p. 34). Complicating and even 'de-mystifying' the apparently organicist thrust of his discussions of 'interactive' modes, such interpolations actually signal a *confluence* of vocabularies, for the ideas of 'fluid force' and 'vibrations' of energy which manifest

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31. Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character As A Medium For Poetry*, edited by Ezra Pound (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1969), p. 23 (text and Pound's footnote). The relationship between Pound and Fenollosa will be returned to shortly.

32. Bell, *Critic as Scientist*, p. 27.

themselves at 'levels' and 'intensities' in Pound's treatment of myth, history and language alike, are figures drawn from the discourse of modern, even *avant-garde*, field-energy physics.

In harnessing such 'figures' in his description of mythic and historical 'creativity' Pound seeks to refute distinctions which might accrue between an aesthetic or perceptual 'idealism' and a scientific or physical 'materialism'. Concurrently, he can be seen to desire to appropriate to his own aesthetics the authority of scientific discipline - he had promoted the work of the artist as 'the permanent basis of psychology and metaphysics' in the 'Osiris' essays, and would later posit the 'agnosticism' of the poet as that which 'grinds an axe for no dogma' but exists as 'the advance guard of the psychologist on the watch for new emotions, new vibrations sensible to faculties as yet ill understood'.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, however, Pound's 'figural' use of science can be read in the other direction, as precisely a de-authorised 'feeling back along the ancient lines of advance'. The traditionally established positivism of science had undergone, at the turn of the century, a conceptual and methodological 'crisis' whose reverberations spread rapidly into literary culture.<sup>34</sup> What Pound successfully realised and utilised was a contemporary access to metaphors used in the articulation of emergent theories of matter, space and energy which considered the properties of 'things' and the media in which they existed as no longer definable in terms of a mechanistic Newtonian physics. Instead of a universe of isolated phenomena exerting influence-at-a-distance upon each other through a neutral 'ether', it was becoming imperative to discuss the physical world in terms of patterns of energy or radiation conceivable only as intensities of activity and inter-relation in a material medium.<sup>35</sup> While 'For the modern scientist', Pound would write, 'energy has no borders, it is a shapeless "mass" of force' ('Cavalcanti', p. 154), aesthetics - and archaic and medieval aesthetics in particular - had already pointed up the way that form emerged precisely from 'intensities' of such energy. As modern physics became a discipline whose claims to objectivity and authority were increasingly 'endangered by the discoveries that physics had itself made',<sup>36</sup> so its discourses sought for a vocabulary that might

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33. 'The Wisdom of Poetry', p. 331. See also Pound's claims for the scientific status of poetry in the first half of the essay 'The Serious Artist'.

34. For full analyses of Pound's use of 'science' see Bell's *Critic as Scientist* and Martin A. Kayman's research into Pound's use of a 'modernist' ideology of science in *The Modernism of Ezra Pound*, especially chapter 3, and 'A Model for Pound's use of "Science"' in *Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading*, edited by Ian F. A. Bell (London and Totowa: Vision Press, 1982), pp. 79-102. See also Hugh Kenner's discussion of the Poundian concern with 'patterned energies' in *The Pound Era*, pp. 145-151, and Donald Davie's treatment of parallels between speculations on primitivism and the concepts of modern physics in the work of Allen Upward and Pound in *Ezra Pound* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), chapter 4.

35. See Kayman, 'A Model for Pound's use of "Science"', p. 84.

36. Henri Poincaré writing in 1908, cited by Kayman in *The Science of Poetry*, p. 82.



describe the sort of inter-relations between matter and medium that field-energy theory was positing. Science was, like *The Spirit of Romance* in its attempts to define an interactive aesthetics, producing 'figures' that might 'serve as an assistance to thought'.

In wrenching itself away from a positivist 'theology' as Pound would conceive it, modern science could be seen to be following a 'figural' route into a universe of 'fluid force' in which the *medium* was dominant, the articulation of certain 'intensities', 'fields' and 'interactions' within which had, Pound implies, been the concern of certain types of 'figural' aesthetic genres and vocabularies since prehistory. It is at this level of the confluence of 'figurality' that Pound's declaration at the opening of *The Spirit of Romance* - 'All ages are contemporaneous' - can perhaps be approached most directly. For Pound the interpretive function of the aesthetic and the authoritative rigour of science had come together within modernity. Their mutual dependence upon the 'figure' to bring their cosmologies into being revealed their accord as interpretive 'arts' whose insights were the result of 'a hyper-scientific precision' (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 87) in their approach to the relation between phenomena and language. Although Pound would be loath to deny, or fail to appropriate to his own project, the authority of modern science, it is its *interaction* with aesthetics that his project would stress -

The arts give us a great percentage of the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of man, of immaterial man, of man considered as a thinking and sentient creature. They begin where the science of medicine leaves off or rather they overlap that science. The borders of the two arts overcross. ('The Serious Artist', p. 42)

- for in their respective paths away from 'dogma' Pound presents the metaphors of science as essentially recursive, tracing a *return* to conceptions of form and being that many elements in the *sagetrieb* had already encoded. It is the dissolution of the authoritative discourse of science within the 'interactive' force-field of tropic relations that signals, for Pound, the potential reduction of *all* discourse to the interpretive interplay of art as discourse and its boundaries become broken down and reconstituted within the domain of the aesthetic.

In 'Cavalcanti', an essay published in 1934 but which Pound insisted 'as a whole must be dated 1910-1931', modern scientific, pagan and Neoplatonic strictures against 'dualism' would fuse around a commentary upon a translation of Guido Cavalcanti's 'Donna mi priegha'. Pound's translation of this love poem, or meditation upon the theme of love, would comprise almost the entirety of canto XXXVI, and for Pound desire and 'illumination' would come together in a synergic union within it, for he

describes it as 'a sort of metaphor on the generation of light'.<sup>37</sup> After the medieval Tuscan poet's description of love as a 'formed trace' in the memory, or an *active* configuration of sensuality, memory and perception that leaves its mark in the 'white light that is allness' (*Cantos*, pp. 178-9), Pound adds an epilogue which cites Erigena to the effect that "'Authority comes from right reason, / never the other way on'" (p. 179). What Pound attacks here is the view that divine authority is *extrinsic* to the physical and sensual world and has sovereignty over it, for if, as Erigena had claimed, 'all things that are are lights', then nothing less than the physical and energised 'total light process, the radiation, reception and reflection of light' must be taken as the substance of the numinous.<sup>38</sup> The place where orthodox authority is attacked, and the 'process' of more fundamental energies documented, becomes, in the sexualised philosophy of Pound's Cavalcanti, a scientifically 'precise' aesthetic and poetic of desire. Thus Pound could insist upon 'the difference between Guido's precise interpretive metaphor' and 'Petrarchan fustian and ornament... Guido thought in accurate terms... the phrases correspond to definite sensations undergone'.<sup>39</sup>

In the poetic frame of 'Donna mi priegha', *virtù* arises as the effect of erotic perception, cathected memory and their literary transcription, allowing Pound to present spiritual enlightenment and sexual desire as an undifferentiated expression of creative energy - 'Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu' (*Cantos*, p. 180). As his essay suggests however (it 'must be dated 1910-1931') the idea of an aestheticised, sexualised and 'de-authorised' experience of the divine as a productive energy was an early feature of his thinking, and *The Spirit of Romance* had presented the heretical cult of *amor*, or the poetic expression of a profane sexual love as practised by the troubadours of Provence, as the vehicle and record of such forces.

The troubadours would provide the mould for Pound's own *avant-garde* re-writing or re-founding of cultural history, for they were the touchstone of a virtuous tradition which carried 'a light from Eleusis', or the energies of an archaic ritual which the heretical troubadour spirit had, like Pound later, to both re-find *and* essentially re-invent. Pound was aware that the term 'troubadour' was derived from the verb *trobar*, to 'invent' or 'find', and probably also that it stemmed from the Latin *tropus* or

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37. 'Cavalcanti', p. 149 and p. 161 - Pound cites a lengthy summary of Grosseteste just prior to this description of Cavalcanti's poem.

38. The first quotation is from *The Cantos*, p. 429, where Pound translates Erigena's maxim *Omnia quae sunt, lumina sunt*, parts or all of which occurs as a motif in the later cantos; the second is from Pound's preliminary gloss to *Confucius*, p. 20.

39. 'Cavalcanti', p. 162. On the distinction that Pound makes between 'interpretive' and 'ornamental' metaphor - the latter being that figure which 'interprets' directly but does not 'explain' the real or merely 'decorate' it, see Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism*, pp. 92-5.



'figure',<sup>40</sup> and in *The Spirit of Romance* Pound would suggest that the 'energised' language of *amor* pared away the authority of the divine in order to leave a radically productive basis for aesthetics as he conceived them.

For Pound the fusion of sexual desire and the religious impulse which grounded troubadour poetry comprised both an echo and a clarification of paganism (it retains 'half memories of Hellenistic mysteries', and while 'They have... lost the names of the gods' *amor* 'remembered the names of lovers', *Spirit of Romance*, p. 90) and an 'aestheticisation' of religious discourse (he terms *amor* 'an art, that is to say, a religion', p. 87). Rather than a religion which proclaimed the 'dogma' of 'the *one truth* or the *universal truth*' the aesthetics of *amor* denied subjection to the authority of extrinsic authority precisely by ritualising an affirmative 'confidence in the life-force' (p. 95) which negated the orthodox dualisms which threatened to divide an 'energised' body or an empowered culture.

Thus Pound could rigorously distinguish *amor* from the authoritarian and hierarchical ethos of monotheism, or any late 'dogmatic' creed 'where someone, having to keep a troublesome rabble in order, invents and scares them with a disagreeable bogie, which he calls god'.<sup>41</sup> Asceticism would be dismissed by him on the same grounds upon which he condemned mimetic conceptions of art, for it promoted a 'passive', cerebral and 'celibate' ethos in which the communicant merely 'registers the beauties, celestial or otherwise, by "contemplation"' (p. 94). Like mimesis, asceticism presupposed structures of differentiation (between the human and the divine, the mind and the body, the perceived and the 'real') which must be mediated by authority, and for Pound, such authority produced only a pious and moral 'celibate ascetics' (p. 90) which cast religion as a system of denial, authoritative dogma and law 'concerned with ethics' (p. 95).

In denying both 'passivity' in the face of any putative divine authority and any 'difference' between the divine and human desire, *amor* could be presented as an artistic practice which had reinscribed religion within a human context. In a way that is consonant with the radically aesthetic 'production' of the world as Heidegger formulates it, in troubadour practice as Pound presents it 'The god has at last succeeded in becoming human, and it is not the beauty of the god but the personality which is the goal

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40. For this etymology see James J. Wilhelm, 'Pound and the Troubadours: Medieval and Modern Rebels', in *The Legacy of Kulchur*, pp. 113-27, pp. 113-4.

41. *Spirit of Romance*, p. 95. Later he would write that 'The greatest tyrannies have arisen from the dogma that the *theos* is one, or that there is a unity above various strata of *theos* which imposes its will upon the sub-strata, and thence upon human individuals' (*Axiomata*, in *Selected Prose*, pp. 49-52, p. 51). Here Pound follows Nietzsche, who had also condemned the apparatus of religious subjugation as the very source of authority - 'The kind of strength that excites *fear* was considered preeminently divine: here was the origin of authority' (*The Will To Power*, p. 30).

of the love and the invocation' (p. 98) - to clarify this Pound had cited Piere Vidal's annunciation 'Good Lady, I think I see God when I gaze on your delicate body' (p. 96). Thus a holistic and unifying *aesthesis* of feeling, sensation, desire and its expression in an art triumphs over a divisive *ascesis*, and the aesthetics of *amor* perform an archaic inversion of inherited religious authority by insisting upon the essentially pagan 'presence' and substantiality of the gods as against the later Roman sense of being 'tied-back' (*re-ligare*) to a divine but absent foundation.<sup>42</sup>

The divine, then, is radically 'earthed' by desire in *amor*, and it is the 'desired' which takes the place of the deity. Pound writes of its aesthetics that 'The Lady... serves as a sort of *mantram*' (p. 97), as Cavalcanti's poetry 'fashions a new person from desire' (*Translations*, p. 125) and so describes an aesthetic grounding for an alternative 'right reason'. But this renegotiated 'authority' and 'reason', as the demotion of the female to an incantation or an artwork suggests, is also that which controls excess - analogous here to potentially chaotic sexual energies. This is made clear through one of many analogies from physics which inform the argument of *The Spirit of Romance*:

The electric current gives light where it meets resistance. I suggest that the living conditions of Provence gave the necessary restraint, produced the tension sufficient for the results, a tension unattainable under, let us say, the living conditions of imperial Rome.

Even as 'restraint' is promoted, a distinction between its 'energised' effects and authority ('imperial Rome') must be asserted, and continues to be asserted in the next paragraph where Pound insists when speaking of the troubadour Arnaut Daniel that 'So far as "morals" go, or at least a moral code in the modern sense, which might interfere in art, Arnaut can no more be accused of having one than can Ovid' (p. 97).

The *difference* of the ordering and energised aesthetic from any precedent or subsequent form of authority must be constantly impressed upon the reader, and balanced with *amor*'s prime function which, of course, is to collapse the authority of the 'divine order' into an aesthetics of desire. Thus Pound can rhetorically ask of it,

Did this "chivalric love," this exotic, take on mediumistic properties? Stimulated by the color or quality of emotion, did that "color" take on forms interpretive of the divine order? Did it lead to an "exteriorization of the sensibility," and interpretation of the cosmos by feeling? (p. 94)

The emphasis upon 'color' in this description of *amor* is important because it evokes the 'energised', 'emotional' and physical activity of light, and the radiant play of light upon desired form signals the emergence of beauty as an aesthetically ordered 'grade' of 'deconcealed' theophany for Pound -

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42. For this distinction see Arendt, 'What is Authority?', p. 121.



encapsulating a metaphysics of 'sight and light' whose exclusion from the English poetic tradition Pound would emphasise.<sup>43</sup> He asks the reader to 'Consider... such passages in Arnaut [Daniel] as "E quel remir contral lums de la lampa' (p. 90) - translated elsewhere as an erotic encounter in which Daniel's lady would 'laugh and strip and stand forth in the lustre' so that the poet might gaze upon her 'Where lamp-light with light limb but half engages'.<sup>44</sup> As in Cavalcanti's poem, which Pound considers to be a 'metaphor on the generation of light', the troubadour aesthetic takes shape around poetic configurations of desired form and illumination which present the sensually apprehended body as a sacramental and 'physical' foundation of the divine. This is exactly the materialist aesthetic impulse that Pound would intertextually incorporate into his own virtuous 'design' of the *sagetrieb*.

Daniel's line 'E quel remir' (that I may gaze [wonder] at her) appears in the intertexts of *The Cantos* as the preface to a personal vision of divine presence:

The scarlet curtain throws a less scarlet shadow;  
Lamplight at Buovilla, e quel remir,  
And all that day  
Nicea moved before me  
And the cold grey air troubled her not  
For all her naked beauty, bit not the tropic skin,  
And the long slender feet lit on the curb's marge  
And her moving height went before me,  
We alone having being.  
And all that day, another day:  
Thin husks I had known as men,  
Dry casques of departed locusts  
speaking a shell of speech... (*Cantos*, p. 26)

Here several strong themes converge. The reference to a 'scarlet curtain' invokes Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which exactly this play of reflected colour is used to describe Atalanta's flushed appearance when racing her suitors,<sup>45</sup> and this 'metamorphic' reference ensures a pagan shade in the 'Lamplight at Buovilla'. A contemporary 'divine' vision follows, and the tone announces that metamorphic energies still inhabit the physical environment. The specificity of the vision ('the long slender feet') subtly anticipates other metamorphic moments in *The Cantos*, for, as in the revelation of Aphrodite to her son Aeneas in *The Aeneid*, a goddess can be known by 'her gait alone'.<sup>46</sup> Gods as

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43. See Helen M. Dennis 'Is Wyatt to Petrarch as Ezra Pound to Arnaut Daniel?', in *Ezra Pound and Europe*, edited by Richard Taylor and Claus Melchior (Amsterdam and Atlanta GA: Editions Rodopi, 1993), pp. 33-49, where it is argued that Pound invokes a 'complex metaphysic of *sight and light*' which he perceived to be absent from an English poetic tradition which had commonly stressed the illusions and disappointments of love (p. 33 and p. 45).

44. *Translations*, p. 175. For a differently angled discussion of this line from Daniel see Kenner's *The Pound Era*, pp. 118-9.

45. See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 241.

46. See note 19 above and Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by W. F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 40. The manifestation of gods in Pound's poetry is often accompanied by reference to gait, speed and bearing, as in the 'Gods of the wingéd shoe!' of 'The Return', 'The flutter of sharp-edged sandals' in 'Phanopoeia', and the sensualised bride in

'interpretive metaphors' of desire continue to signal the poet's access to a 'radiant world... of moving energies' ('Cavalcanti', p. 154) which the *sagetrieb* has encoded. The insubstantial men and speech that provide a contrast to 'that day' allude to the elders who spoke sceptically, like 'cicadas', of the beauty of Helen of Troy in the *Iliad*, only to admit on seeing her that 'she is the very image of an immortal goddess'.<sup>47</sup> But Pound's men are 'husks', 'departed locusts', and can be taken as a generalised backdrop of senescent authority; or, specifically, as the acknowledged 'legislators' against whom, using identical metaphors, Pound pitted an outlawed tradition of artists who proved 'the general vacuity of public opinion' by themselves 'legislating':

Shelley, Yeats, Swinburne, with their 'unacknowledged legislators'... with 'The rest live under us; Rémy' de Gourmont, when he says that most men think only husks and shells of the thoughts that have been already lived over by others...<sup>48</sup>

What Pound presents in the vision of 'Nicea' are 'outlawed' energies and beauties which persist in the fabric of both the text and the emotional 'intensities' of the real. The canto had already posited the 'beauty' of 'to-day against the past', and claimed that all is "'Contemporary'" as long as 'the passion endures'. It is this passion which still translates 'The essence of religion' into 'the *present* tense' for Pound,<sup>49</sup> for theophany inheres in the human (desire, beauty) and the physical (radiation, sexuality, the desire given substance by the play of light upon forms) as legislated by a different 'order', and is latent in the energies of a metamorphically perceived 'nature' itself.

Moreover, with his emphasis upon *physical* and *material* energies and manifestations Pound could claim that the sensualised tropes and 'restraints' of the aesthetics of *amor* comprised a non-abstract, or scientifically *precise* transcription of vision and feeling - the 'definite sensations undergone' which *The Spirit of Romance* presented as an approach to 'this place where the ecstasy is not a whirl or a madness of the senses, but a glow arising from the exact nature of perception' (p. 91). It is such 'precision' that legitimates Imagism's urge towards the 'Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective' ('A Retrospect', p. 3), as it can be seen to be grounded in a conception of aesthetics which are 'de-authorised' in the spirit of *amor*. That is, that the indeterminacy between the 'bonds and borders' of the objective and subjective, the 'physical' and the emotional, are a legacy of these outlaw aesthetics, as the early poem 'The Flame' indicates:

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'Dance Figure' who is set apart as one of whom the poet says 'There is none like thee among the dancers; / None with swift feet' (*Shorter Poems*, p. 74, p. 169 and p. 91).

47. Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1950), p. 68.

48. 'The Prose Tradition in Verse', *Literary Essays*, pp. 371-7, p. 371.

49. The first quotations here paraphrase the paratactic lines "That, Fritz, is the era, to-day against the past, / "Contemporary." And the passion endures' (*Cantos*, p. 25); the second is from 'Deus est Amor', in *Selected Prose*, p. 72.



'Tis not a game that plays at mates and mating,  
 Provence knew;  
 'Tis not a game of barter, lands and houses,  
 Provence knew...  
 We have gone forth beyond your bonds and borders,  
 Provence knew... (*Shorter Poems*, p. 50)

As the troubadours had subverted orthodox distinctions and 'borders', so Pound would render authoritative discourses 'interactive', and an artist's work could for him be 'exact' insofar as it was, or became again, true to the nature and transcription of desire:

In proportion as his work is exact... in formulation of desire, so is it durable and so is it 'useful'; I mean it maintains the precision and clarity of thought, not merely for the benefit of a few dilettantes and "lovers of literature", but maintains the health of thought outside literary circles and in non-literary existence, in general individual and communal life.<sup>50</sup>

The 'borders' which Provence once transgressed prefigured the general demise of authoritative distinctions within and between discourses which modernity announced to Pound. This included the 'aestheticisation of the political', for it is the 'exact... formulation of desire' which ensures the 'health' of 'general individual and communal life'. In 1942 the de-authorising aesthetic materialism of the troubadours was presented as a *lack* of foundation that political authority (the city) now experienced, and its interinvolvement with an unauthorised and interactive aesthetics was declared, in the form of a simultaneously 'simple' and arcantly free-floating palindromic figure:

R O M A  
 O       M  
 M       O  
 A M O R

This interactive pattern would for Pound continue to testify - like the materialism of the troubadours - to 'the substantiality of the gods' ('A Visiting Card', p. 297) while intimating that the contemporary *Roma* of Mussolini partook of this material energy 'beyond' authority. Later in *The Cantos* such ideas would continue to appear without the support of a prose context ('Beyond civic order: L'AMOR', *Cantos*, p. 634), but the 'palindromic' configuration of 1942 attests to the fact that Italian fascism and the de-authorising love-cult of Provence were manifestations of the same energies to Pound's mind. Thus he could consider Mussolini not as a 'politician', but as an artist or *artifex*: 'Treat him as *artifex* and all the details fall into place', Pound writes, 'Treat him as anything save the artist and you will get muddled with contradictions'.<sup>51</sup>

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50. 'How To Read', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 15-40, p. 22. In Confucian thinking Pound would also find 'the process which unites outer and inner, object and subject, and thence constitutes a harmony with the seasons of earth and heaven' (*Confucius*, p. 179).

51. *Jefferson and / or Mussolini* (New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 34.

Mussolini acquired such a status and *virtù* for Pound because of the affinities of his fascism with a (Machiavellian) 're-founding' of the political. Superficially, his revolutionary politics were similar to Lenin's - a figure whom Pound admired and considered to have 'evolved a new medium, a sort of expression half way between writing and action' - but Pound would insist that 'The fascist revolution is infinitely more INTERESTING than the Russian revolution because it is not a revolution according to preconceived type'.<sup>52</sup> Rather, Mussolini had rediscovered an *archetypal* revolutionary form whose impulse was derived from the 'inventive' legacy of the troubadours, a legacy which had at its heart the de-authorisation of the divine and its re-founding in aesthetic terms; thus Pound could attempt to consolidate the distinction between Mussolini and Lenin by stating that 'Lenin did not have the Vatican in his front garden'.<sup>53</sup>

The palindromic figure, then, suggests the relation or conflation of the political and the aesthetic as they converge in the figure of Mussolini, hinting that in the identity of AMOR/ROMA a metamorphosis of discourses could be seen - a "'magic moment" or moment of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidien into "divine or permanent world." Gods, etc' (*Letters*, p. 210). Such transformations could occur because for Pound Mussolini participated in an intellectual 'struggle' which sought to deliver 'facts that illuminate like a flash of lightning, and authors who set their subjects in a steady light' ('A Visiting Card', p. 297), and the palindrome performs exactly such a 'swift' aesthetic production, a production which 'governs knowledge' as a 'switchboard governs an electric circuit'.

What the palindrome suggests, then, is the sort of 'swift and unanalysable process' by which things 'become other things' according to the anti-logic of metamorphosis. As has already been indicated, such a process gestures towards a kind of psychosis of language, perception and 'visionary interpretation' in which 'the absolute proximity' and 'total instantaneousness' of the real and of 'relations' within it predominate. Eventually, Pound would present 'The ideogramic method', or a

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52. Quotations are taken from 'Bureaucracy the Flail of Jehovah', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 187-91, p. 187, and *Jefferson and / or Mussolini*, p. 24.

53. *Jefferson and / or Mussolini*, p. 25. An accord persists between Pound and Lenin. In 1917 Pound would declare that 'Religious dogma is a set of arbitrary, unprovable statements about the unknown. A clergy, any clergy, is an organised set of men using these arbitrary statements to further their own designs. There is no room for such among people of any enlightenment' (From 'Provincialism the Enemy' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 159-173, p. 160). Within Pound's anti-clericalist programme the 'aestheticisation' of the divine annuls the alienating authority of the clergy as arbiters of the divine or any other word, and this echoes Lenin's pronouncement, made in the same year and utilising an identical analogy, that the power of the capitalist state, through the agency of 'special bodies of armed men', similarly alienates society from its own creative energies (see Vladimir I. U. Lenin, *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution* [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977], p. 13).



method which 'consists of presenting one facet and then another' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 51) in order to 'reveal' relations between apparently unrelated phenomena, as that which grounded an aesthetics in which 'facts' again 'illuminate like a flash of lightning' and 'things' mutate by 'swift and unanalysable process'. This would extend, at the level of form, into a poetics which could present its own juxtaposition of images and its own 'design' of history alike as 'a thing in a given position or relation, or of a combination of things. It *means* the thing or the action or the situation'.<sup>54</sup> The ideogram promised no less than a method of constellating and presenting facts which transcended, as Pound writes in a different context, 'The multifarious nature of cognisance' which has 'only the Alphabet for a filing system'.<sup>55</sup>

*The Cantos* would accordingly be arranged by these 'outlawed' ideogrammic relations, or a kind of psychosis of signification whose politics, as many commentators have shown, must be regarded as the crux of Pound's authoritarianism. This inheres in the fact that Pound's 'design' of history aspires to displace its own authority by a strategic 'concealment of origins'.<sup>56</sup> The anti-discursive principles which feature in his programme valorise the inter-similitudes of their own elements as that which is apparently 'unmediated', and thus, as in the palindrome, shut out 'all processes of linguistic analysis, inquiry, debate' by insisting upon the immediacy of the 'iconic' or visual over the 'written', the sequential and the 'linear'.<sup>57</sup>

As such critiques stress, the dogmatic nature of the 'design' of history and the *sagetrieb* which emerge from these aspects of Pound's programme remain unexamined by the writer, while offering to the reader only patterns of textual incompleteness which, paradoxically, insist upon a univocal 'poetic' recuperation. Nevertheless, as in the opposition between aesthetics and authority, the related opposition between the ideogrammic or 'figural' and the literal in Pound's project would exploit the inherently 'ambivalent' relationship between the processes of language and the nature of the 'real' and provide another focus for both his most radical and most doctrinal thinking. It remains to give an account of the ideogram and metamorphosis as they feature in this programme.

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54. *ABC of Reading*, p. 21. As Peter Makin suggests, the ideogram was also related to the *haiku*-like parataxis of Inagism, for in both 'a statement may consist in the placing-together of two verbal "things". The interaction between them need not be described, and indeed cannot be adequately described... the interaction arises because things, in so far as they are felt to be significant, are also felt to be "in process", to contain potency for particular action' (*Pound's Cantos* [London and Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1985], p. 34).

55. 'The Jefferson-Adams Letters as a Shrine and a Monument', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 117-128, p. 124.

56. I take this phrase from Bell's concluding discussion of Pound's authoritarianism in *Critic As Scientist*, p. 245.

57. See Vincent Sherry's recent *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 179, which arrives at similar conclusions to earlier critiques of Pound's authoritarianism, but by analysing the importance of other 'arts' ('visual' and musical) in his thinking.



## Between Nature and Metaphor: Ideogram, Figure, Metamorphosis

Pound's introduction to the ideogram in 1913, through the posthumous writings of the Sinologist Ernest Fenollosa, post-dated much of his thinking on the artistic 'making' of history, the radical 'activity' of the artwork, and the primal material energies which he considered certain traditions of aesthetics to transcribe. However, *The Chinese Written Character As A Medium For Poetry*, a work edited and to some extent 'shaped' by Pound, presented, through its idea of the 'ideogrammic relations' which governed Chinese script, a potent conceptual and textual supplement to the principles of Pound's project. Fenollosa writes that

... Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based on a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion.

... Chinese poetry... speaks at once with the vividness of painting and with the mobility of sounds. It is, in some sense, more objective than either, more dramatic. In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental counters, but to be watching *things* work out their own fate.

... these ideographic roots carry in them the *verbal idea of action*... (*Chinese Written Character*, pp. 8-9)

The pictographic basis of Chinese writing, Fenollosa claimed, gave access to a world in which the 'operations of nature', rather than the arbitrary conventions of an alphabetic script, left their traces in the written language. A man seeing a horse, for example, would be represented by a stylised figure of a man upon two legs, followed by an eye upon running legs, terminating with a horse upon four legs. Fenollosa writes that 'The thought-picture is not only called up by these signs as well as by words, but far more vividly and concretely. Legs belong to all three characters: they are *alive*' (pp. 8-9). Complementing Pound's elision of the distinction between object and subject, representation and 'action', Fenollosa would stress that the ideogram contained verbal elements which effectively eliminated the possibility of the isolate, objective noun:

A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots. Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: Things in motion, motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to present them.

(p. 10)

Fenollosa would help substantiate Pound's use of science by suggesting that 'Valid scientific thought' involved following 'entangled lines of forces as they pulse through things', and the ideogram's agrammatical qualities were 'in harmony' with 'scientific law', for 'Poetry agrees with science and not with logic' (*Chinese Written Character*, p. 12, p. 14 and p. 28). Reaching towards an example of



'things in motion' Fenollosa presents a particularly apt 'example of an English sentence: "'Reading promotes writing'", which 'would be expressed in Chinese by three full verbs' (p. 29). It is apt because it describes exactly the continuum of activity or the kind of self-perpetuating aesthetic force which Pound constantly tried to locate in the 'aestheticised' environment. It suggests the subject as a locus of indissociable processes of 'reception' and 'conception', and augments the idea of language as the index of 'interactive' energy-fields, or the register of a 'fluid force' which permeates and unites the subject the 'verbalised' environment and the text - in such conditions the 'book' might become 'a ball of light in one's hand' and we could be seen to 'read for power'.

Fenollosa's theory of the ideogram would isolate metaphor as a Western trope defined by the specific relations it *performs*. 'Nature herself has no grammar... A "part of speech" is only *what it does*' Fenollosa writes; that is, that language describes a process which involves not only the formation of meaning, but 'the *transference of power*' (p. 16 and p. 12). Such power resides in metaphor's ability to elide the function of the copula (as it exists in the simile for example) and present articulation as the site of a radical emergence: 'There is in reality no such verb as a pure copula... our very word *exist* means "to stand forth," to show oneself by a definite act' (p. 15). The accord between this radical metaphoric power, Nietzschean conceptions of 'the powers that fashion myths' and Pound's conception of mythic language as that which 'founds' a world is consolidated by Fenollosa's use of myth as the analogue of ideogrammic process. 'Metaphor', he writes, 'the revealer of nature, is the very substance of poetry. The known interprets the obscure, the universe is alive with myth'; '... poetry was the earliest of the world arts; poetry, language and the care of myth grew up together' (p. 23 and p. 24).

Rather than providing any radical departure from the patterns that Pound's earlier thinking had followed, Fenollosa's 'ideogrammic' conception of language appeared to place them within a specific, if occulted, cultural continuum which Pound's introduction to the work called '*the fundamentals of all aesthetics*' (p. 3). As already suggested, Fenollosa would help provide an overall justification of Pound's programme when he suggested that

Metaphor... is at once the substance of nature and of language. Poetry only does consciously what the primitive races did unconsciously. The chief work of literary men in dealing with language, and of poets especially, lies in feeling back along the ancient lines of advance.

To which Pound added this footnote:

I would submit in all humility that this applies in the rendering of ancient texts. The poet, in dealing with his own time, must also see to it that language does not petrify on his hands. He must prepare for new advances along the lines of true metaphor, that is interpretative metaphor, or image, as dialectically opposed to untrue, or ornamental metaphor. (p. 23)

At the same time that Fenollosa's work justifies Pound's virtuous or creative practice in translation and intertextual citation ('feeling back along the ancient lines of *advance*') Pound suggests 'true metaphor' as the vehicle of this 'advance'. Pound had, in *The Spirit of Romance*, already hinted that the prime vehicle of 'vital' process - archaic and modern - was metaphor, which he described, after Aristotle, as the 'swift perception of relations', and this early study would indicate that in the aesthetics of *amor* a "'language beyond metaphor'", or a kind of 'metaphorical perception' (p. 158) existed as that which gave substance to such relations and processes. When Fenollosa argued that the ideogram used 'material images to suggest immaterial relations', and thus displayed a 'substratum' of 'natural' metaphoric activity within even the most abstract ideogrammic concepts, Pound justifiably reiterated Aristotle's definition (*Chinese Written Character*, p. 22) in order to indicate that his own thinking upon metaphor had already covered similar ground. The ('swift' and 'simple') creative translations and mutations that 'metaphoric perception' described would continue to be the 'Wisdom' that 'lies next thee, / simply, past metaphor' in the Pisan cantos (*Cantos*, p. 526), and some of *The Cantos*' last words (citing Pound himself?) would be an apparent quotation lamenting the failure of the power of the figural to be realised:

"A pity that poets have used symbol and metaphor  
and no man learned anything from them  
for their speaking in figures." (p. 799)

In many areas, then, Pound's method had already anticipated, in its theories of form, language and culture, the kinds of interaction between language, the forces of 'nature' and non-'mono-linear' processes that Fenollosa ascribed to the ideogram. What Fenollosa's description of a 'natural connection between thing and sign' as it purportedly inheres in the ideogram concurrently offers to Pound is what in Derridean terms could be called a pre-established and 'naturalised' logocentrism - a transparency of the sign that halts all 'free reflection on the origin and status of writing' as a material force by asserting the prior fulness of 'nature' as its ground.<sup>58</sup> Pound has often been criticised, justifiably, for assuming, upholding and exploiting the idea of an affinity between nature and representation in the ideogram.<sup>59</sup> What is acknowledged less often is that Pound sympathised with and utilised the terms of Fenollosa's analysis while recognising that the ideogram's affinity with nature was

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58. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 43.

59. Paul Smith, for instance, considers the theory of the ideogram to be 'the fundamental Poundian metaphor which assumes that language is co-extensive, analogous and co-operative with the natural world' (*Pound Revised*, p. 60), and Durant writes of the ideology of the ideogram presenting to Pound 'a natural world of extraordinary simplicity and self-evidence' from which 'ethics and culture might be derived' (*Identity in Crisis*, p. 84).



actually overplayed by the Sinologist. It would actually be the refusal of *abstraction* that Pound would value in the ideogram: 'Not the picturesque element I was trying to emphasise so much as the pt. re western man "defining" by receding'; and as for the vital accord between ideogram and natural process Pound would concede 'Am not sure the lexicographers back him up'.<sup>60</sup> However, if there is an uncertainty about Pound's actual use of the 'ideology' of the ideogram, then there is an 'ambivalence' in conceptions of its nature which he fully exploits.

While appealing to notions of 'natural process' Fenollosa himself would acknowledge that such process was open-ended; that is, that in the interactions that the ideogram portrays 'there is no completeness' just as 'in nature there is *no* completeness' (p. 11). When Fenollosa writes that 'primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary *subjective* processes. They are possible only because they follow objective lines of relation in nature herself' (p. 22), he actually institutes an openness or indeterminacy between the categories of 'metaphor' and 'nature', an indeterminacy underwritten by the fact that in an ideogrammic conception of the natural 'motion leaks everywhere... All processes in nature are interrelated; and thus there could be no complete sentence (according to this definition) save one which it would take all time to pronounce' (p. 11). Here the direction of determinacy between the metaphoric and the real, as Pound's writing itself would constantly imply, remains fluid: metaphors can be seen to *produce* the real and the natural just as they can be seen to be produced *by* it.

In order to stress a correlate indeterminacy of origin and representation as it resided in the ideogram, Derrida cites Pound and Fenollosa as *avant-garde* writers who had helped deconstruct a system which configured writing as the supplement of 'self-presence', or an ideology which posited the text as the superficial augmentation of an authoritative centre of being:

Should one not stop considering writing as the eclipse that comes to surprise and obscure the glory of the world?

... This is the meaning of the work of Fenollosa [*sic*] whose influence upon Ezra Pound and his poetics is well known: this irreducibly graphic poetics was, with that of Mallarmé, the first break in the most entrenched Western tradition. (*Of Grammatology*, p. 92)

What Derrida promotes here is the de-centring effect, or the awareness of an ontological difference, that the ideogrammic character presents to Western thinking when it turns to the relation between a

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60. *Letters*, p. 333. On Pound's supposed misrecognition of the stylised and phonetic aspects of the ideogram see Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse*, pp. 139-40; on misrepresentations of the nature of the ideogram by Western thought generally see Hwa Yol Jung, 'Misreading the Ideogram: From Fenollosa to Derrida and McLuhan', *Paideuma*, 13, 1 (1984), pp. 211-227.



text and an 'expressive subject, for the duality or opposition between a 'nature' which the subject inhabits, and that which alphabetic writing merely represents, is partially closed by the ideogram.<sup>61</sup>

Such a fundamental disturbance of reified oppositions would obviously appeal to Pound in that the 'objectivity' of the ideogram actually de-centres the object, and the 'process' that it transcribes uncovers an indeterminacy of source and origin. But that the ideogram disrupted the opposition between *art* and 'nature', through the co-presence within it of 'discourse' and 'figure' without subordination, was probably a prime consideration for Pound, as the ideogram demands a kind of thinking 'before the alternative of presence and absence' which his aesthetics constantly exploit. Indeed, the ideogram as it occurs graphically in *The Cantos* must appear as an *artform* to most Western eyes; it is a non-phonetic 'silence' in the text that becomes the place where art *works* for Pound. Like the 'artwork' of Malatesta's *Tempio*, it denotes a space or a 'time for silence' in the text where a certain power can be deemed to supervene as the 'book' again aspires to 'be a ball of light in one's hand'.

The ideogram in Pound's project, then, carries within it a characteristically 'ambivalent' metaphysics, and, like myth, sexual materialism, and the 'art' of history, presents itself as another facet of a self-involved *paideuma* which pivots upon a thinking of the non-differentiation of art and life. As Pound's emphasis upon 'metaphoric perception' in *The Spirit of Romance* suggests, however, the function of the ideogram can be seen as a cross-cultural elaboration of his thinking upon the primacy of the figure, figurative language and figurative 'organisation' in his de-authorising programme generally.

As has been shown, the Poundian 'figure' acts as an interface that announces the undifferentiation of art and the real, the archaic and the modern, subject and object, the emotional and the physical. Pound had cited the 'signs of gods and godly attendants' as tropic extensions of a sensual universe of 'fluid force' and evidence of a creative and 'vital' culture. Fenollosa provided evidence of a figural and graphic indeterminacy between the categories of poetry and nature. So Nietzsche before him had suggested that in the dynamics of a mythic culture 'lived' metaphors or 'figures' constantly disrupt the categories of philosophy by their 'drives' and transferences - the 'real', or the 'web of concepts' that produces the real for knowledge, would be, if such a culture could be recovered, endlessly 'torn by art'

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61. Foucault would locate a similar effect in the calligram or the concrete arrangement of words into a 'picture' of the text's theme or topic, for it exists as an attempt to make 'simultaneously present and visible, image, text, resemblance, affirmation, and their common ground'; thus, for Foucault, the calligram can be seen to undercut 'the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read' (see Michel Foucault, *This Is Not A Pipe, With Illustrations and Letters by René Magritte*, translated by James Harkness [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983], p. 54 and p. 21).



('On Truth and Lies', p. 89) and the ascendancy of the figural in the production of the real established. Nietzsche would insist, like Pound, that for the early Greeks it was the instability and 'fluidity' of form that bore witness to an undifferentiation between metaphor and metamorphosis, and for such a culture 'Their metamorphoses are what distinguishes them' ('The Philosopher', p. 30). It is, for Nietzsche, metaphor and 'the continuation of the mythical drive' (p. 19) which converges in a metamorphic scene where

... every tree can suddenly speak as a nymph, when a god in the shape of a bull can drag away maidens, when even the goddess Athene herself is suddenly seen in the company of Peisistratus driving through the market place of Athens with a beautiful team of horses - and this is what the honest Athenian believed - then, as in a dream, anything is possible at each moment, and all of nature swarms around man as if she were nothing but the masquerade of the gods, who were merely amusing themselves by deceiving men in all these shapes. ('On Truth and Lies', p. 89)

The full cultural significance of such a celebration of 'art's mastery over life' is evidenced here in the detail of Athene (guardian of cities) accompanying an Athenian ruler, for it locates Nietzsche's 'masquerade of the gods' in a specifically political context - or rather a context that is spectacularly *de*-politicised precisely because political questions cannot occur within it and extrinsic authority cannot be 'differentiated' from its condition. Pisistratus was a benevolent tyrant who impressed the Athenian populace by 'artfully' employing the services of a tall, beautiful and commanding woman (in some accounts a famed prostitute) to accompany him in the guise of a goddess during an attempt to consolidate a popular *coup*.<sup>62</sup> Questions of politics are engulfed here by questions relating to the apparent incongruity between a ludicrous artifice and an 'authoritative' political reality, a distinction which Pisistratus and his goddess ride astride and negate. To insist upon a political reading of this passage, the prophetic drive of Nietzsche's essay implies, is to articulate a misguided desire for 'the ideal *polis* after the concept "*polis*" has had its day' (*Will To Power*, p. 231).

Nietzsche invokes the Platonic distinction between civic authority and artifice or 'illusion' by presenting a scenario in which this opposition cannot function. Pound too would acknowledge that a metamorphic aesthetics must inhabit the domain of the 'uncertain' and absurd, of 'illusion' and the etymologically related 'ludicrous', if, as in Ovid, it wished to present a condition in which 'The mood, the play is everything; the facts are nothing' (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 16). Pound's early poem 'The Tree' thematised metamorphosis and allowed the narrator insight into processes which were 'rank folly to my

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62. The epithet 'artful' as applied to Pisistratus I take from J. Lemprière's *Lemprière's Classical Dictionary* (London: Bracken Books, 1984), p. 532; see also J. A. Smith's discussion of Pisistratus in *Athens Under the Tyrants* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989), pp. 29-32, and Herodotus' account of this episode as presented in G. R. Stanton's *Athenian Politics 800-500 B. C., A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 92.

head before'. A later extension of this theme, 'A Girl', would disrupt the direction of reference, through the ambiguity of its metaphors, between the 'Girl', the speaker of the poem, and a natural environment, and end with the line "And all this is folly to the world".<sup>63</sup> Later, in *The Cantos*, a sublime and virtuous *hilaritas* would be located at the heart of Neoplatonist theophany, and the gods presented as an effect of the 'swift-gliding' clouds and the 'speed' of communication:

Hilaritas the virtue *hilaritas*...

But Gemisto: "Are Gods by hilaritas";  
and their speed in communication.  
et in nebulas simiglianza...<sup>64</sup>

In Pound and Nietzsche alike, the charge of 'folly' levelled against metamorphosis would be countered by folly's intensification in the form of ecstatic (Dionysian) transformations and a 'masquerade' of language in which the burden of proof is shifted away from the 'artifice' of the artwork and onto the inherited 'objectivity' of the real. The types of linguistic and conceptual 'exchange' that such an 'unauthorised' condition presupposes repudiates, as Nietzsche repudiates, any approach to metaphor as a logical 'comparison' between literal and figurative categories; it is posited, rather as the medium of transformation or metamorphosis, the "'magic moment'" that is a 'masquerade' while simultaneously being, as Pound would insist, the reassertion of 'a lost reality and a lost intensity'.

The moment that metaphor becomes metamorphic, or ontological (or 'psychotic') rather than rhetorical, must be considered, as Pound and Nietzsche perceive, as the most radical, or most de-authorised point in any system of signification, and such de-authorisation appears to be the goal of at least one trajectory of Pound's programme. 'Metaphoric perception', as it arises in Pound's depiction of *amor* for example, describes not merely an 'energised' relation between things, but the subversion of figural 'relation' by a usually repressed 'vital' *continuity* or undifferentiation between categories. An interactive and sexualised materialist aesthetics, grounded in an outlawed tradition and an *avant-garde* science, generates and 'earths' such transformations, and the de-authorising movements of poetic language ensures that such 'perception' involves not only the metaphoric transference of value from one

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63. See *Shorter Poems*, p. 3 and p. 62, and Kayman's analysis of the 'metamorphic metaphor' as it operates in 'A Girl' in *The Modernism of Ezra Pound*, pp. 42-3.

64. *The Cantos*, p. 528 and p. 685. The first quotation alludes to the 'sublime joy' of Erigena's writing (see Terrell's *Companion*, p. 459), and Gemisto (Plethon) is significant in that he reinforces the link between Neoplatonism and Malatesta - they had met and Gemisto's ashes would eventually reside in the *Tempio* (see Makin, *Pound's Cantos*, pp. 139-40).



field into another (from the divine to the human for example) but the metamorphic *reversibility* of one field into another (the human *is* the divine).<sup>65</sup>

As has been suggested throughout this discussion, the 'ambivalence' of Pound's programme resides in the dogmatic assertion of a scale of values and metaphysical categories whose authority, through recourse to the principles of aesthetics, is apparently undercut. While the authoritarian thrust of Pound's project is overt - in the dogmatic suppression of critique, in the 'aestheticisation' of the political itself, in the phallic principle which 'orders' the latent anarchy of desire - this project's *aim*, to a great extent, is to rigorously dismantle the apparatus of authority and programatically destabilise the label 'authoritarian'.

As Ian Bell has pointed out, Pound's 'curriculum' becomes validated through a 'concealment of origins' which disassembles authority, for the anarchic self-evidence of the *sagetrieb* of history as Pound presents it justifies itself from within - like metaphor, whose correspondences defy the literal and hence disguise their origins and their figurative 'mode of control'.<sup>66</sup> That the 'origin' and hence 'control' of Pound's writing can be traced to many sources is evident, and perhaps these sources can in turn be traced to a monolithic concept of the 'natural' which underwrites even the most 'unfounded' Poundian figures - as Fenollosa had claimed, 'Metaphor' is 'the revealer of nature'.

As has already been seen in Pound's use of the ideogram, however, an indeterminacy between text and 'nature' also features in Pound's project as that which destabilises even this origin, and such instability would appear early in *The Cantos* as the continuation of earlier negotiations with authority. In canto II Pound would reinvolve the debate with Browning which featured in 'Three Cantos' upon the legitimacy of the artistic 'animation' of the past:

Hang it all, Robert Browning,  
there can be but one "Sordello." (*Cantos*, p. 6)

Browning immediately fades from the poem, however, and *The Cantos*' initial *paideumic* 'montage' of histories supervenes. Browning had been ushered in by the truncated phrase from *Sordello* which closes canto I - 'So that:',<sup>67</sup> and this phrase recurs at the opening of canto XVII. What follows in this

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65. Jean Baudrillard presents similar ideas about the more radical implications of poetic metaphor in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (translated by Iain Hamilton Grant [London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993], p. 220); see also his formulation of metamorphosis as 'the radical point of the system, the point where there is no longer any law or symbolic order', or the point where discursive control as it differentiates between the figurative and the 'real' breaks down, in *Forget Foucault and Forget Baudrillard* (an interview with Sylvère Lotringer), translated by Nicole Dufresne, Phil Beitchman, Lee Hildreth and Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987), p. 75.

66. Bell, *Critic as Scientist*, p. 245 and p. 131.

67. *The Cantos*, p. 5; the phrase occurs in Browning's *Sordello*, p. 122.

later canto, however, is a display of metamorphic process with the artist at its centre in the guise of Dionysus. The writer is now himself the *source* of transformation, the witness of a 'goddess' (Athene) as she moves in the natural environment, and the overseer of certain established 'cities':

So that the vines burst from my fingers  
And the bees weighted with pollen  
Move heavily in the vine-shoots:  
    chirr - chirr - chir-rikk - a purring sound,  
And the birds sleepily in the branches.  
    ZAGREUS! IO ZAGREUS!  
With the first pale-clear of the heaven  
And the cities set in their hills,  
And the goddess of the fair knees  
Moving there, with the oak-woods behind her... (p. 76)

Apparently, Pound allows the pages which separate the truncated phrase that ends canto I and opens canto XVII to stand as testimony of his own *virtuous* arrangement and ordering of history - he has, as it were, already staged the fact that the 'truth' of a certain history at least is 'inside *this* discourse'. By the time of canto XVII Pound no longer needs to reinvigorate the 'ghost' of any Sordello, for he has proved himself and his artwork to be the source of radical metamorphic 'making'. To reinforce this fact, images that evoke Botticelli's Venus emerge in the canto - 'she like a great shell curved' - and Koré-Persephone oversees the 'materials' of nature becoming indistinguishable from the 'materials' of art:

"           There, in the forest of marble,  
"           the stone trees - out of water -  
"           the arbours of stone -  
"           marble leaf, over leaf...

And the white forest of marble, bent bough over bough,  
The pleached arbour of stone... (pp. 78-9)

Arguably, Pound has managed to present nature itself as a 'form' elicited by his own artwork, and as the natural becomes a category produced by *The Cantos* and its author, it is a category which still has 'the light of the doer, as it were / a form cleaving to it'.

In the production of nature can be seen Pound's most radical and most autocratic gesture. It is an extension of that logic in which Simonetta cannot be regarded as the 'original' for Botticelli's Venus, but exists rather as a node in a process of 'interaction' where the hierarchy of 'original' and 'copy', 'real' and 'representation', is dysfunctional. Despite Pound's dependence upon a metaphysics of origins and an ideology of the 'natural', his de-authorising aesthetics attempt to return to a nature or an 'origin' which only the artwork brings into being. Through the endless substitution or circularity of authoritative categories and artifice the ambivalence of Pound's modernism emerges, for these



processes mirror the constant deferral and defusing that his own authoritarianism aspires towards as it compulsively propels itself into the unauthorised realm of the aesthetic.

### Coda: Pound and Eliot

This initial analysis of Pound's aesthetics has traced the way in which the category of the aesthetic aspires to become a radically empowering *alternative* to traditional discourses of authority in his modernist programme. The constant slippage of his project into authoritarian or totalitarian paradigms of the political is overt, yet the 'scandal' of his work remains in the fact that the utopian impulse of his thinking has constant recourse to a systematic de-authorisation which, as has been shown, underlies even the most 'regressive' aspects of his project. That such de-authorisation should lead to the promotion of metamorphic forces in an aestheticised language and environment is inevitable, for the radical artifice of metamorphosis is that which most fully tests or negates the ambit of rational discourse.

The distinction between an augmentative authority and a radical artifice which claims to 're-found' the real as it has arisen from the foregoing can be followed most appropriately through a comparison and *contrast* with the modernism of T. S. Eliot, for despite the frequent near-equation of their names and practices as they feature in the modernist canon, their projects are opposed in fundamental ways. This opposition can be clearly seen at the point at which, logically, their careers most fully intersect:

#### *The Waste Land*

The actual dedication of this work is taken from Dante's *Purgatorio* XXVI - 'For Ezra Pound *il miglior fabbro*' - and from a canto whose ending had been cited in the poem's final montage: 'Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina'. In context, these references point to Dante's meeting with Arnaut Daniel, who is suffering in purgatory for his sexual promiscuity. Daniel is indicated by another poet as 'the better workman or maker (*fabbro*) in his mother tongue', and he then admonishes Dante to be 'mindful' of his pain before he is returned to the refining fire.<sup>68</sup> Arguably, Eliot's late citation of Daniel's suffering and humility is an act of authorial endorsement which brings *The Waste Land's* last

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68. See *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 59 and p. 75, and *The Divine Comedy*, pp. 314-5 (canto XXVI, lines 117 and 141-8). The passage from Dante which presents Daniel had already occurred and would recur often, either directly cited or thematised, in Eliot's work. The line cited at the end of the *The Waste Land* was, for instance, the initial epigraph for 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', and other lines from the canto would form the title of Eliot's second collection of poems (*Ara Vos Prec*) and provide the (subsequently dropped) title of the third section of *Ash Wednesday* (see Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977], p. 98).

disjunctions and fragments to an ambiguous but essentially redemptive Christian focus.<sup>69</sup> The idea of atonement that Daniel's character invokes for Eliot relates only ironically to Pound however, for Daniel's sensual aesthetics are celebrated in a chapter of *The Spirit of Romance* entitled precisely 'Il Miglior Fabbro'.

When Eliot dedicated *The Waste Land* to Pound with a quotation from Dante it was an act that seemed to indicate a convergence of concerns in modernist poetics. For Eliot, writing in 1920, the *Commedia* existed primarily as an augmentation of an authoritative Christian theology which had, in a way now apparently unavailable within a secular modernity, undergone a 'complete absorption' into the life and poetry of the mediaeval author.<sup>70</sup> For Eliot, Dante defined the primal fall from grace or 'lack' which modernity must negotiate. Pound, however, had already historicised and critiqued the *Commedia* in *The Spirit of Romance* by assessing Dante's poem as a work of supreme imagination and insisting that its significance lay not in its dogma but in its dramatic and tragic lyricism. As the testimony of a personal, emotional and spiritual quest, Pound considered the *Commedia* to be 'the tremendous lyric of the subjective Dante'; as the elaboration and legitimation of a Christian cosmology, however, the poem presented itself to history as 'the culmination of one age rather than the beginning of the next' (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 153 and p. 166).

While Eliot's Daniel remains subordinate and answerable to a divine source of authority, for Pound the term *fabbro* accurately sums up the de-authorised acts of 'making' that his aesthetics encompass. Although Pound valued the work of Dante, he valued it on his own terms. The body of Christian belief which Eliot ultimately considered the *Commedia* to augment Pound would regard as a supererogatory dogma whose presence was interesting only insofar as its Christian orthodoxies were *disturbed* by Dante's 'subjective' concern with love and the power of desire. These emerged for him in the *Commedia* through the figure of Beatrice, who stands as a powerful configuration of the tension between a spiritual and sensual idealism, a configuration that announces the presence in Dante's work of a fundamentally sexual aspect of the religious impulse, for Beatrice epitomises 'The rise of mariolatry' and 'its pagan lineage' as it existed in the work of the troubadours (*Spirit of Romance*, p. 91).

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69. The idea that Eliot endorses the lustful Daniel's suffering is reinforced in section III of the later and overtly Christian poem *Ash Wednesday*, for the 'Daniel' canto provided the original title for this section ('Som de l'escalina') which deals precisely with the poet's renunciation while 'on the stair' of the sensual and sexual temptations below (see *Complete Poems and Plays* p. 93).

70. Eliot, 'Dante' in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1976), pp. 159-171, p. 163.



The next chapter will expand these themes and treat the concept of authority in Eliot's writing as it presents itself as a *restraint* upon the aesthetic. This will begin a series of comparisons which will help to define, situate, and reveal the limits of Pound's modernism.

### 3. Eliot and Pound: Artifice and Augmentation

In the teeth of his own insistence that modern poetry must become 'the assertion of a positive', Pound would in 1920 publish the negative and 'symptomatic' poem or cycle of poems *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. This work marks an uncharacteristic point of self-scrutiny in Pound's writing, being constructed as a dialogue between poet(s) and historical contexts, it produces a poetic subject that is both interrogating and interrogated - in effect both writing subject and critic.<sup>1</sup> As Pound had considered the personae of his earlier poetry to comprise a 'search for the real' which involved 'casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem' (*Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 85), so *Mauberley* can be considered to continue this search in a different register. Despite its apparently autobiographical focus, however, the poem suggests that Pound's concerns lie not with any relation between the self and its masks, but with the derogated status of his art in an age which -

... demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace...

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,  
Made with no loss of time,  
A prose kinema, not, assuredly, alabaster  
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme. (*Shorter Poems*, p. 188)

*Mauberley* has been read as Pound's objective review of, and 'farewell' to, English culture and an envisaged but aborted literary renaissance.<sup>2</sup> A network of references to literary figures and movements that imply the preciousness of English *fin de siècle* culture support the view that Pound is disengaging

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1. The poem is structured in the form of two dated sequences (1919 and 1920), and it is common practice to attribute provisional identities to the personae that Pound's headings indicate ('E. P.' and 'Mauberley'). Christine Brooke-Rose's suggestion that 'the first part' is 'distinctly an ironically diminished self-portrait by Pound... the second, equally distinctly... a devastating portrait of the minor artist in the very society castigated throughout part I, is typical (see Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* [London: Faber and Faber, 1971], p. 159). For a full commentary on the poem see John J. Espey's *Ezra Pound's Mauberley: A Study in Composition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955).

2. Following Pound's own declaration of it as such a 'farewell' on the title page of the poem as it appeared in *Personae* (1926); see also Marianne Korn's discussion of the literary context of the poem in *Ezra Pound: Purpose / Form / Meaning* (London: Middlesex Polytechnic Press, 1983), p. 109-113.



himself from what were once strong (in the early poetry at least) but, as he later judged, intrinsically decadent influences.

But the poem goes beyond a critique of a modern literary inheritance, for its diagnostic and historical foci constantly shift. The theme of a general European malaise arises in powerful contemporary social and political critiques (such as the 'disillusions' that accompany the Great War and the general 'tawdry cheapness' of contemporaneity evoked in parts IV and V of the opening sequence). These specific polemics, however, shift all too readily into more general charges which relate the attrition of vital energies to the rise of a Christian tradition and the ascendancy of democracy:

Christ follows Dionysus,  
Phallic and ambrosial  
Made way for macerations;  
Caliban casts out Ariel...

All men, in law, are equals.  
Free of Pisistratus,  
We choose a knave or an eunuch  
To rule over us. (p. 189)

The reference to Pisistratus and the later invocation of modern history as 'neo-Nietzschean clatter' (p. 201) appear to direct the reader to modernist notions of the authenticity of prehistory which might contain the values that the poem wishes to promote. Yet the most unironised statement in *Mauberley* emerges in 'Envoi', a remodelling of Edmund Waller's 'Go, Lovely Rose!' which apparently gestures towards the English Renaissance as a quarry for more authentic and enduring models of poetry (verses that might '*live / As roses might, in magic amber laid*', p. 197). The significance of Waller's 'song', originally set to music by Henry Lawes, will emerge only later, when the ability of a similar tradition of sung verses to 'brave time' and endure '*... when change hath broken down / All things save Beauty alone*' can be related to the themes of love and memory in canto XXXVI's translation of 'Donna mi priegha'.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, just as Pisistratus is reduced in *Mauberley* to a redolent name in the polyphonic 'clatter' of history that, it must be assumed, indicates an ancient ruler who was neither knavish nor emasculated, so 'Envoi' appears to sit as a 'quotation' apart, a museum-piece or poetic model itself as petrified as a rose in amber or a representation beneath a 'glaze' (p. 204).

If it is difficult to locate the 'positive' values within the poem's shifting ironies it has proved easier to read *Mauberley* as an auto-critique which dismisses the poet's earlier work as an attempt to

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3. Pound would dedicate his glossed translation of Cavalcanti's poem to 'Thomas Campion his ghost, and to the ghost of Henry Lawes' (see 'Cavalcanti', p. 155 and *Shorter Poems*, p. 248).

'resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry' (p. 187) and prepare the ground for a more innovative poetics. It has already been stated that the passive 'hedonism' (and the concomitant 'impressionism') of the 'Maunderley' persona is condemned within the poem, and section II of the second sequence apparently lays this charge of sensualist 'impressionism' directly at the door of the early 'Three Cantos':

- Given that is his "fundamental passion,"  
This urge to convey the relation  
Of eye-lid and cheek-bone  
By verbal manifestation...

He had passed, incontinent, full gaze,  
The wide-banded irides  
And botticellian sprays implied  
In their diastasis;

Which anaesthesia, noted a year late,  
And weighed, revealed his great affect,  
(Orchid), mandate  
Of Eros, a retrospect. (p. 200)

These verses can be read as an indictment of the poet's earlier efforts to convey the significance of the sexual aspects of Botticelli's 'The Birth of Venus', for they appear to have been dissipated by concentration upon merely formal or cosmetic effects ('the relation / Of eye-lid and cheek-bone') which overlook the erotic significance of the pagan emergence that the poem posits. The poet's 'anaesthesia' gives a sexual mandate to the artwork (the Greek for 'Orchid' punning on testicles) only in 'retrospect', a belatedness soon to be reinforced through the presentation of the poet's alter-ego as one for whom the image of Aphrodite is available only in the reproductive plates of art history - as 'Anadyomene in the opening / Pages of Reinach' (p. 204). As the previous chapter argued, however, the significance of Botticelli's painting is *specifically* sexual in 'Three Cantos'. This suggests that the direction of the critique that *Maunderley* contains is aimed not so much at a previous Poundian 'self' but at a hypothetical artist who has *failed* to make the connections that Pound's more recent poetry has already explored. Further, it has been shown that Pound was eager to promote the transforming power of metamorphosis in the landscape of 'Three Cantos' ('Gods float in the azure air'), and such power is exactly what fails in the environment depicted in section II of *Maunderley*, whose next verse images

Mouths biting empty air,  
The still stone dogs,  
Caught in metamorphosis, were  
Left him as epilogues. (p. 200)

The 'stone dogs', anticipated in the epigraph of 'Maunderley 1920' which cites Ovid's description of the dog of Cephalus transformed into stone (*Vacuus exercet in aera morsus*, p. 198) parallel the Ovidian



scene in their testimony to a metamorphosis that was *not* witnessed.<sup>4</sup> *Mauberley* had already thematised the failure of metamorphosis in an earlier section, where

"Daphne with her thighs in bark  
Stretches toward me her leafy hands," -  
Subjectively. In the stuffed satin drawing-room...

(p. 196)

The transformation of Daphne into a laurel occurs only as an echo of a verse by Théophile Gautier translated into a bourgeois environment, a quotation whose significance can be apprehended only 'Subjectively' - the Poundian overlooker of these events being 'objectively' aware of their current 'social in consequence' (p. 201).

While possibly taking to task the poet's 'former' self for an inability to apprehend the significance of sexual and metamorphic energies in the artwork and in the contemporary environment, *Mauberley* actually reiterates this content as it had arisen in 'Three Cantos', acting as a 'negative gloss' upon the earlier work not by 'shedding' its values but by obliquely elaborating them.<sup>5</sup> A more obvious elaboration and extension, involving the metamorphic power of the poet, occurs in the relation between the 'Three Cantos' and canto XVII ('So that the vines burst from *my* fingers'). But the intermediate *Mauberley* promotes the energised ideal of the artist of *virtù* no less in its renunciation of a decadent and 'impressionist' aesthetic environment and an orthodox programme of 'Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition"' (*Shorter Poems*, p. 202). The poem's subtext consistently implies that only a misreading of the poet's previous work could have considered him to have endorsed the aberrations or conformed to the values of the settings that *Mauberley* itemises.

If *Mauberley* appears to perform a critique of its author that is actually a reiteration of earlier ideals and powers, then this elaboration of an aesthetics of metamorphosis with the controlling artist at its centre jars with what has come to be seen as the central statement upon authorship in English modernism - T. S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.

Since the essay was published a year before *Mauberley*, it is possible to see Pound's apparent analysis of his own artistic standing as a respectful but ironic response to it, for Eliot's emphasis would

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4. As told in *Metamorphoses*, the dog Laelaps chased a monster which was threatening Thebes, but apparently the dog could not catch it, its mouth merely 'snapped uselessly at the air'. Taking his eyes from the chase for a moment Cephalus looks back to see dog and monster already transformed by the gods into stone; see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, pp. 176-177.

5. Precisely the opposite, however, is suggested by Massimo Bacigalupo who writes of the 'Botticellian' passages of *Mauberley* as a criticism of 'his effete alter ego for responding to the painting somewhat as he had done in ur-canto 1'; see the lengthy footnote to this effect in Bacigalupo's *The Formed Trace: The Later Poetry of Ezra Pound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 137.

fall upon the elimination of the personality of the artist to accommodate a higher authority, and a veneration of the tradition which the *auctor* and artwork impersonally augment:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism... what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.<sup>6</sup>

Though Pound's artist of *virtù* may 'not comment' in the presentation of 'the luminous detail' ('Osiris', p. 23) that constitutes the aesthetic 'microcosmos', the discernment and arrangement of this detail is in itself the artist's virtuous signature. While for the Eliot of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' the artist exists only in the 'continual surrender of himself... to something more valuable... a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality' (p. 40), the Poundian artist valorises traditions which he has vigorously re-forged (the 'ideal order' is the *responsibility* of the artist of *virtù*) and whose energies saturate the present. As Pound would write of the centrality of the modern artist in his own historiography, 'We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anaesthetised on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 60).

This late refusal of a sense of history or tradition 'anaesthetised on the table' comprises a direct (if misquoted) reference to the opening lines of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', and ranges Pound's own 'vitalism' against Eliot's purported lack of the sense and 'sensuality' of history. The fundamental difference between Pound and Eliot's ideals of authority, authorship and tradition had been declared earlier by Pound when he wrote in 'Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus' that 'Mr. Eliot and I are in agreement, or "belong to the same school of critics", in so far as we both believe that existing works form a complete order which is changed by the introduction of the "really new" work'. Pound notes, however, that Eliot's criticism from 1919 had performed a 'counter-revolution' to his own initial 'revolution' (Pound refers here to his own 'New Method' of literary historicism which pre-dated the 'Tradition' essay by seven years) in that it had turned literary criticism and interpretation into an 'autotelic activity', placing the mandate for the 'design' of tradition into the hands of 'professors and students' who policed, at a critical remove, the artist's movements. Pound berated the reverence which

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6. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, edited by Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 37-44, p. 38.



Eliot's writing had directed towards an essentially *dead* or unfeeling (anaesthetised) past enshrined in authoritative 'monuments' in a passage from this essay whose significance has already been treated:

'Existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves'. It would be healthier to use a zoological term rather than the word monument. It is much easier to think of the *Odyssey* or *Le Testament* or Catullus' *Epithalamium* as something living than as a series of cenotaphs. After all, Homer, Villon, Propertius, speak of the world as I know it... Even Dante and Guido with their so highly specialised culture speak of a part of life as I know it. ATHANATOS.<sup>7</sup>

All of the writers mentioned here under the principle of 'ATHANATOS' feature as elements of the 'vital' and 'outlaw' pattern of Poundian history described 23 years earlier in *The Spirit of Romance*, whereas he implicitly aligns Eliot's 'tradition' with the 'negative' impulses that this term evokes. 'ATHANATOS' thus undercuts the monumental but 'static' authority of Eliot's conception of tradition while asserting the 'vital' principles that Pound's own canon was grounded upon. Eliot's writing, Pound would come to realise, extolled no 'vital' impulses but depended upon an anti-aesthetic which pitted its authority precisely against the aesthetics of 'ATHANATOS' that he valued.

However, in 1922, while the relationship between the two poets was still mutually supportive, Pound would edit *The Waste Land*. The enigmatic, disjunct and allusive text which emerged would become an iconic example of modernist poetics, its apparent record of a culture in the process of fragmentation paradoxically acting to revolutionise literary and critical practices and mark, in Michael Levenson's words, 'the institutionalization of the [modern] movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy'.<sup>8</sup> That *The Waste Land* managed to thematise the fragmentation of culture while actually establishing itself at the core of English High modernist literature and literary doctrine is no more paradoxical than the fact that Eliot would enjoy an 'unequalled authority as a spokesman for European modernism' that was due at least in part to the fact that his authorial stance in *The Waste Land* elided its author and positioned him outside this crisis.<sup>9</sup>

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7. 'Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus', quotations are taken from pp. 359-60 and p. 364. William Carlos Williams, also lamenting the capacity of Eliot's writing to attract primarily academic responses, would say of *The Waste Land* that 'Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt we were on the point of an escape to matters... rooted in the locality which should give it fruit... I had to watch him carry my world off with him, the fool, to the enemy' (Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* [New York: New Directions, 1967], p. 174).

8. See Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 213. The incorporation of *The Waste Land* into the academic critical canon was aided by the efforts of F. R. Leavis, whose idea of the poem as a 'rich disorganisation' of forms which in their very fulness worked to suggest 'a break-down of forms and the irrevocable loss of that sense of absoluteness which seems necessary to a robust culture' sums up well the ambivalent status of *The Waste Land* as a text which, like many texts in the modern canon inspired by it, reflect or perpetrate at textual and thematic levels the fragmentation of the culture that gives this canon support (see Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972], pp. 70-71). For a discussion of the relationship between Eliot's work and the formation of a modern critical canon see Parrinder's *Authors and Authority*, chapter 5.

9. I take this phrase from Stephen Bonnycastle, *In Search of Authority: An Introductory Guide to Literary Theory* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1991), p. 177. Eliot expressed such a 'removed' attitude towards his own cultural analysis when he wrote in 1918 that 'It is the final perfection, the consummation of an American to become, not an Englishman,



But the phenomenon of *The Waste Land* is most paradoxical in the fact that it was the result of a collaboration that ended the alliance between Pound and Eliot. It has been recognised that Eliot's draft of the poem resembled an uneven collection of verse-forms, styles and voices apparently written anxiously under the influence of Joyce's *Ulysses* (then appearing in the *The Little Review*) much more than it did the final 'oracular, impersonal, omniscient diagnosis of cultural collapse'.<sup>10</sup> If the final 'oracular' gravity of the published text was a product of Pound's editing, then it was a product which Eliot was disposed to disown - he habitually remained silent on *The Waste Land* or described it as an insignificant 'grouse against life', a 'piece of rhythmical grumbling'.<sup>11</sup> Eliot's tendency to disown the poem can be read as evidence of the fact that Pound's editorial delivery of *The Waste Land* ('Ezra performed the Caesarean operation' Pound wrote - *Letters*, p. 170) actually produced a text more Pound's than Eliot's. *The Waste Land* thus granted to Eliot an authority which (as his subsequent disavowals attest) he felt he did not deserve, while Pound's crucial editorial role went largely unacknowledged. The subsequent anxieties (on Eliot's part) and resentments (on Pound's part) that resulted from this indeterminate authorship can be seen to radically effect the shape and tone of subsequent careers which never quite emerge from the *The Waste Land*'s shadow, as Eliot aspires to become an established 'editor' and Pound remains the marginalised 'loathed disturber' of modern letters.<sup>12</sup>

Compounding these tensions are suggestions that if the period that produced *Mauberry* marked a period of revaluation for Pound, then the years preceding *The Waste Land* - essentially the same years (1918 - 1921) - marked a period of unproductivity, anxiety and illness for Eliot. This implies that the poets' collaboration on *The Waste Land* was of therapeutic value for both, as Pound could

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but a European - something which no born European, nor person of any European nationality, can become.' (From 'In Memory of Henry James', cited by Michael North in *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound*, p. 111).

10. I take this phrase from John Harwood's "'These fragments you have shelved (shored)": Pound, Eliot and *The Waste Land*', in *Pound in Multiple Perspectives*, edited by Andrew Gibson, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 188-215, p. 189.

11. Eliot's comments are cited in *'The Waste Land': A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, edited by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 1.

12. As Harwood suggests, Eliot's own verse would take a long time to live up to the reputation established by the authority of the poem (only after *Four Quartets*, what he felt to be his finest work, would he feel confident enough to respond to belated questions about *The Waste Land*) and Pound's increasing alienation from, and denunciation of the literary establishment (resulting from what Harwood calls Pound's 'paranoid fantasies') can be seen as a reaction to the orthodox career in letters that his editorial efforts granted to Eliot (see "'These fragments..."", p. 189 and p. 211). The characterisation of Eliot as 'editor' and Pound as 'loathed disturber' is taken from Pound's 'Harold Munro' in *Criterion* II, cited in Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 214. The final chapter of Levenson's study, entitled 'The Editor and the Loathed Disturber', judges the ascendancy of Eliot's version of 'tradition' to academic respectability to be a '*rapprochement* between modernist literature and traditional authority' (p. 219), a *rapprochement* that Pound consistently refused. Pound and Eliot's orientations towards orthodoxy and tradition are also discussed by Lindberg in chapter 3 of *Reading Pound Reading*, under a title that reiterates this difference - 'Tradition and Heresy'.



exercise his virtuosity in giving the original text an authority that he felt his own poetry lacked precisely by excising from it the anxious traces of its author and allowing a matrix of authoritative intertexts to function in their place - a strategy encapsulated in Pound's dismissal of Eliot's original emotive epigraph from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ('The horror! the horror!') as 'not weighty enough to stand the citation'.<sup>13</sup>

A further dimension can be added to such readings if the similarity of Pound and Eliot's poetic diagnoses of history and affronts to literary convention are considered only as tangential doctrinal moments in which the two poets were in accord. Although the poets often appeared united in what they were against, the respective 'positives' which they wished to assert were essentially antithetical, and in *The Waste Land* Eliot's orthodox orientation towards authority would actually form itself through an anti-aesthetic *attack* upon Poundian ideas of art and its role in culture that amounted to a secession from his mentor. These elements Pound excised or 'shelved' (see *The Cantos*, p. 28) in the draft, in an act that can be seen to deny the definition of authority which Eliot desired while simultaneously negating the implicit attack upon the editor's own aesthetics. *The Waste Land's* canonical status might be due, ironically, to a meeting between orthodox and heretical orientations towards authority worked into a compromise which, while successful in itself, augmented the modernist programme of neither poet. As is the case with Pound, a fruitful route into Eliot's relative orthodoxy is through his criticism.

### Criticism Against Culture

The modernism of *The Waste Land* proclaims itself most overtly at the level of formal technique. Composed of not only 'free' but disjunctive, fragmented verse interspersed with allusions, it can be seen to attempt a formal rendering of the 'critical' condition of contemporary history that Eliot retrospectively presented in 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth', a review essay prompted by the work of Joyce that appeared a year after *The Waste Land's* publication:

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13. Letter from Pound to Eliot, in *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1, 1898-1922*, edited by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 497. Wayne Koestenbaum, in 'The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria' (*Twentieth Century Literature*, 34 (1988), pp. 113-139, gives a gendered psychoanalytic framework in which Eliot and Pound's collaboration on *The Waste Land* can be read. Taking the collaboration between Freud and Josef Bauer which produced their *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) as a triangulation between two males and a hysterical feminine subject, Koestenbaum suggests an identical triangulation to have occurred between Pound, Eliot and the 'hysterical' and discontinuous initial draft of Eliot's poem. He cites many obscure (and suppressed) letters and texts in order to show that the 'feminine' Eliot (under the influence of his sick and hysterical wife Vivienne) and his 'hysterical' draft were 'treated' and 'masculinised' by Pound through editorial and therapeutic acts which inscribe 'Fantasies of male maternity' as a 'buttress' of masculine modernism (p. 124).

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity... [Joyce's method] is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.<sup>14</sup>

Since Matthew Arnold had opposed the forces of 'culture' to the threat of 'anarchy' in 1869 with the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, Eliot's vocabulary carries within it an inherited ideal of culture as the corrective source of order, shape and significance which contemporary history lacks. However, Eliot, like Pound, would react against Arnold by regarding his writing as the index of the decadent end of an epoch. For Eliot he epitomised an age that generated (in Arendt's terms) a 'spurious glorification of culture',<sup>15</sup> but it would not be Arnoldian critique which Eliot rejected; rather he would balk at the underlying ethos of the humanist redemption of civilisation through its own cultural products which Arnold's project implied.

In 1920 Eliot would open his essay 'The Perfect Critic' with the idea that Arnold's cultural pronouncements themselves constituted a 'spurious glorification' of criticism, a criticism too enveloped in the exhausted values of its own epoch to attain a truly creative status, and comparable to Coleridge's criticism only in terms of belatedness and insubstantiality:

Coleridge was perhaps the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last. After Coleridge we have Matthew Arnold; but Arnold - I think it will be conceded - was rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic, a popularizer rather than a creator of ideas.<sup>16</sup>

It is the mythopoeic concerns of Eliot's review essay that most radically distance modern from Arnoldian values however. The programme of the much-quoted '*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth' can be read as an *ex post facto* summation (1923) of the modernist project so far as it had worked in an oblique correspondence with the ideals of an inherited Arnoldian literary tradition which looked to art in a search for value, 'significance' and a 'principle of authority' in history.<sup>17</sup> The concerns latent in Eliot's review, however, lay stress upon forms and not values, emphasising myth's ability to lend 'a *shape* and a significance' to the contemporary in a way which works to assert modern art's distance from inherited notions of any incremental 'development' of culture.

To invoke classical and mythic forms, but to de-emphasise any consideration of the values which the term 'myth' traditionally connotes, suggests a predominantly structural relationship between modernity and prehistory. The mythic scaffold of *Ulysses* had won for its author, Eliot states, a 'discipline... in a world which offers very little assistance to that end' (p. 178). For Pound, it would be

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14. From '*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 175-78, p. 177.

15. See Arendt, 'Tradition and the Modern Age', in *Between Past and Future*, pp. 17-40, p. 28

16. From 'The Perfect Critic' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 50-58, p. 50.

17. I take this phrase from Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (London and New York: Nelson and Sons, 1910), p. 147.



exactly the 'discipline' of Joyce's Homeric 'scaffold' which the reader could dispense with.<sup>18</sup> Eliot, however, considered such a scaffold as an imperative; 'No one else has built a novel upon such a foundation before: it has never before been necessary' (p. 177) he writes, suggesting that the modernist necessity arises because of the acceleration of a cultural crisis that had effectively dislocated modernity from sequential history as 'never before'. Myth and mythic 'discipline' in this particular instance oppose themselves both to humanist rationales of cultural continuity and developmental narratives of history - 'Instead of narrative method', Eliot writes, 'we may now use the mythical method'. However, temporal discontinuity would emphasise structural tensions for Eliot; rather than evidencing a world brought into being the mythic method describes for him 'a step toward making the modern world *possible* for art' (p. 178, my emphasis).

While it postulates a relation between the primitive and the modern, myth is still only that shaping or formal element ('simply a way of controlling, of ordering') which is available to modernity only as a consciously manipulated device, a system of non-identity by which the contemporary can define and discipline itself. Aware that he writes at a time when the concept of myth is potently presenting itself to Pound and others as an ideal paradigm of the unity of art and the 'vital', Eliot insists upon a notion of myth which essentially intimidates modern culture, as when he writes of J. G. Frazer's influential anthropological study that 'The *Golden Bough* can be read in two ways: as a collection of entertaining myths, or as a revelation of that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation'.<sup>19</sup>

In the tension between that which is 'vanished' and that which is a 'continuation' the mode of the mythic emerges in Eliot as a form which speaks to modernity mainly in terms of an irrecoverable *loss* (neither a Poundian 'positive' nor an Arnoldian model for 'human perfection' [*Culture and Anarchy*, p. 95]) which is also an identity with a primal impulse towards form. The culture that Arnold epitomises, Eliot suggests, in its naive quest for identity with classical values and virtues, betrays itself as an interruption or secondary overlaying of an impulse towards form which now can be seen to relate the mythic and the modern, the latter being no more than a system of ruptures and distances between real and ideal which 'none of us can escape' ('*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*', p. 175) and only disciplined relations in form, as they become the paradigm of a depleted culture's needs, can mediate.

Elsewhere, continuing a disengagement from the Arnoldian tradition, Eliot, like Pound, alludes to Arnold's conception of literature as 'a criticism of life' and pronounces it a statement 'so general as to

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18. See 'Ulysses' in Pound's *Literary Essays*, pp. 403-9, p. 406.

19. Eliot writing in the *Dial* (1923), cited in Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 195.

be meaningless'.<sup>20</sup> In a gesture implicitly designed to undercut the gravity of the humanist project, Eliot demotes poetry to the status of a 'superior amusement' but goes on to define it by cataloguing its ability to assume cultural authority under certain conditions. With particular emphasis laid upon its specious role as a political medium and the proximity of its cultural status to that once occupied by religion, Eliot writes,

... certainly poetry is not the inculcation of morals, or the direction of politics; and no more is it religion, or an equivalent of religion except by some monstrous abuse of words. (*Sacred Wood*, p. ix)

Whereas for Pound the vital relation of poetic word to thing, and of artwork to world is paramount, Eliot recognises and then denies the possibility of artistic forms assuming any authority 'equivalent' to orthodox belief. Poetic language can, like myth, provide a structure and a discipline, but, like myth, can also be regarded as trivial (a 'superior amusement', an 'entertainment') and thus will never usurp the metaphysical and metacultural authority of religious belief. Thus the 'abuse of words' by which a cultural product can aspire to the status of religion dismisses Arnold's (and implicitly Pound's) idea that poetry might contain 'the strongest part of our religion to-day' or that its role as a substitute for the failure of the 'fact' that underwrites religion calls poetry to 'higher destinies' in the dissemination of cultural values and the ratification of human beliefs.<sup>21</sup>

This distance from Pound emerges even more starkly in Eliot's opinion of Pater, whose *fin de siècle* injunctions to treat 'life in the spirit of art' fundamentally violate Eliot's urge to authority. This urge he consistently ranged against both a humanist and aestheticist nineteenth-century as an epoch that had attempted 'to set up Culture in the place of Religion'. The Paterian veneration of art and the aesthetic suggested, as Eliot rightly saw, a form of 'aesthetic religion' predicated upon 'some confusion between life and art', a confusion which threatened to replace the absolute authority of god with the 'living authority' of art.<sup>22</sup>

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20. From the preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood*, p. ix. For a treatment of this preface as Eliot's misreading of his own affinities with an Arnoldian cultural project see Lionel Trilling's introduction to *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955), pp. xii-xiii.

21. Quotations are taken from the opening paragraphs of Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry'. Northrop Frye in *T. S. Eliot: An Introduction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1963) summarises the distinction between Arnold and Eliot's formulations of culture well: 'In Matthew Arnold's conception of culture, religion is a cultural product, a part of which culture is the whole... In Eliot religion forms a third level above human society. Its presence there guarantees Burke's distinction between a higher order of human and a lower order of physical nature' (p. 12). Such distinctions are crucial to Eliot's later writings on culture such as those found in *After Strange Gods: A Primer in Modern Heresy* (London: Faber, 1934).

22. Quotations are taken from Eliot's essay 'Arnold and Pater' in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), pp. 393-405, p. 400, p. 402 and p. 404. For a discussion of Eliot's attitude towards Pater see Perry Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern*, pp. 71-4.



After *The Waste Land* Eliot's literary, philosophical and political attitudes would become increasingly explicit about their basis in Christian authority.<sup>23</sup> Such values were not only drawn from traditional sources, but from the modernist revaluation of values in which both he and Pound were participating - although each would emphasise opposed aspects of this revaluation.<sup>24</sup> While the central flaw in Arnold's cultural ideal according to Eliot's judgement was precisely its non-relational and self-affirming humanist grounding, such humanism also propagated the overvaluation of an essentially romantic subjectivity and personality which valorised solipsistic categories such as the 'emotion' and the 'idea'.<sup>25</sup> For Eliot, any function which art performs must transcend the epiphenomenon of the personal, a belief which he stated unambiguously in 'The Perfect Critic':

The sentimental person, in whom a work of art arouses all sorts of emotions which have nothing to do with that work of art whatever, but are accidents of personal association, is an incomplete artist. (p. 53)

In statements such as these Eliot pronounces the inadequacy of a critical tradition which looks only to its own products to provide its dynamic. Poetry, for Eliot, ideally 'has its own life' which finds definition in terms of a structured relation between (not a 'monstrous abuse' of) language and a central 'mystery' conceived in terms of hierarchised 'planes':

If I ask myself (to take a comparison on a higher plane) why I prefer the poetry of Dante to that of Shakespeare, I should have to say, because it seems to me to illustrate a saner attitude towards the mystery of life. (*The Sacred Wood*, p. x)

Although Eliot appears in the valorisation of 'the mystery of life' to have rejected an inherited Arnoldian conception of 'life' only to reassert, in Poundian fashion, the promise of poetry's delivery of a similar quality at a 'higher' and 'saner' level, the discrimination between the poetry of Shakespeare and Dante indicates a crucial distinction between the function of art in what Eliot perceived as a humanist as against its desired and authoritative modern guise.

In 'The Perfect Critic' Eliot had written that 'The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the

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23. For a late statement of the ideally complementary relationship between art and religion in culture see *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 26.

24. A link between the two poets can be found in the figure of T. E. Hulme, from whom Pound took many of his ideas on modern art and the nature of the poetic image. Eliot, however, would cite with approbation Hulme's conservative and 'classical' (as opposed to 'romantic') notion of the 'limited' and 'imperfect' condition of a humanity 'endowed with Original Sin'; see for instance Eliot's citation of Hulme at the end of 'Baudelaire' in *Selected Essays*, pp. 381-92, p. 392, and Hulme's 'Reflections On Violence', in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Herbert Read (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 249-60, p. 256, and 'Romanticism and Classicism', *ibid*, pp. 113-140).

25. 'It will not do to talk of "emotion recollected in tranquillity"... poetry is something over and above... and quite different from, a collection of psychological data about the minds of poets... something quite different from a body of neatly ordered biographical data' (Preface to *The Sacred Wood*, pp. ix-x).

object as it really is...' (p. 57). In an essay on *Hamlet* published a year earlier this opposition between emotion and objectivity was central to a discussion of Shakespeare's construction of play and character which described the protagonist as a man 'dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear'.<sup>26</sup> Such an 'excess' of emotion in *Hamlet* betrays Shakespeare's failure to 'objectify' the dramatic situation presented in terms of a 'formula' or an 'objective correlative' which would evoke emotion as a relation between an individual and an external framework of correlate 'facts', 'objects' or 'events'.<sup>27</sup>

Eliot's economy of object against emotion is defined through the excessive focus upon personal feeling in 'Hamlet', but the consequent personalism and excess that he considered Shakespeare's writing to produce he would later extrapolate into history. Using an analogy structured in terms of an attenuation of the religious sensibility attendant upon 'the disintegration of Christendom', Eliot writes of the advent of a 'provincialism' in artistic and human concerns that gave rise to the epiphenomenon of personality. The decay of 'a common belief and a common culture' around the time of the Renaissance, Eliot writes, allowed such provincialism to usurp a pattern of 'classical' values 'set in Rome', the seat of orthodox Christianity and the symbolic centre of cultural authority.<sup>28</sup>

If Shakespeare, however crudely, can be figured as a poet whose recourse to structural principles extrinsic to the play of human qualities was deficient for Eliot, and could be adduced as a prefiguration of the narrow 'provincial' individualism of a fragmented modern culture, Dante, and the orthodox cosmology that his work augments, is considered the classically 'objective' metaphysician *par excellence*. In an early essay that appeared in *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot proclaims that 'no emotion is contemplated by Dante purely in and for itself' in the structure of the *Divine Comedy*, but that it is 'modified by the position assigned to the person in the eternal scheme, is coloured by the atmosphere of that person's residence in one of the three worlds'.<sup>29</sup> In the mediaeval structure of Dante's cosmos there is no such thing as a 'state' (emotional or otherwise) of the individual that exists without reference and relation to a prior allegorical system of meaning and quality, for 'A state, in itself, is nothing whatever.' (p. 170)

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26. From 'Hamlet' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 45-49, p. 48.

27. 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked... this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*.' ('Hamlet', p. 48).

28. 'What is a Classic?', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 115-131, p. 122 and p. 130.

29. 'Dante', p. 167.



In a later essay on Dante Eliot was to define the poetry of the mediaeval author in terms of an even more explicit contrast to the 'provincial' products of later culture by stressing the 'lucidity' and 'translucence' of Dante's language. Like Pound, he would condemn the supposedly obscurantist function of 'ornamental' tropes in language, but for Eliot such 'opacity' was a result of the 'self-conscious' and self-regarding associations that language disseminated in the absence of an authoritative allegorical foundation:

The style of Dante has a particular lucidity... The thought may be obscure but the word is lucid, or rather translucent. In English poetry... words have associations, and the groups of words *in* association have associations, which is a kind of local self-consciousness, because they are the growth of a *particular* civilization... The culture of Dante was not of one European country but of Europe... of pre-Reformation and pre-Renaissance times... and undoubtedly there is an opacity, or inspissation of poetic style throughout Europe after the Renaissance.<sup>30</sup>

Pound would judge the Renaissance to initiate a degeneration, but a degeneration 'without any new roots' caused in the most part by a *reluctance* to disengage from the declining culture that underwrites Dante's work.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, it is the precedence of foundational belief which allows Dante's language to be 'allegorically' transparent in Eliot's formulation, and it is this which determines its 'universal' as opposed to its 'provincial' frames of reference - allowing Eliot to declare that it is the 'allegorical method' that makes for the 'simplicity and intelligibility' (Dante II, p. 209) of Dante's *oeuvre*.

In Eliot's judgement, the complex fields of association that the (humanist) metaphors of Shakespeare stimulate, as against the specific parallels that provide the allegorical clarity of Dante, show that 'Shakespeare is expansive rather than intensive in his writing' (Dante II, p. 210). Metaphors of clarity and illumination underwrite the logic of Eliot's distinction; individuated and private states bedim some of the works of Shakespeare, which are considered to be 'full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light' ('Hamlet', p. 48). The condition of the word in Dante's language, by contrast, is characterised by its 'simplicity' and its use of '*clear visual images*' (p. 209, emphasis in the original). The semantic admixture of qualities of definition, transparency and illumination in the terms 'translucent' and 'clear' help suggest a particular use of language in which the denotative status of the word is doubly certain, for it is both signifier and window, and not, as in a process of 'unauthorised' connotation, a mere connective in a field of 'expansive' figures.

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30. 'Dante', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 205-230, p. 207; citations from this later essay will be indicated as 'Dante II'.

31. Pound writes, in one of his most programmatic essays, that '... After Villon and for several centuries, poetry can be considered as *fioritura*, as an efflorescence, almost an efflorescence, and without any new roots... beginning with the Italian writers after Dante, coming through the Latin writers of the Renaissance, French, Spanish, English... the whole is elaboration, mediaeval basis, and wash after wash of Roman or Hellenic influence. I mean one need not read any particular part of it for purpose of learning one's comparative values.' ('How To Read', pp. 28-9).



Metaphor in Dante is 'intensive', it operates for Eliot not at a rhetorical but a structural level, elaborating not the surface but the ground of the work, for, '... as the whole poem of Dante is, if you like, one vast metaphor, there is hardly any place for metaphor in the detail of it' ('Dante II', p. 210). Dante's use of allegoric tropes functions to bind literature to a primary structure of signification which, like ideal belief, has undergone a 'complete absorption into life' ('Dante', p. 163), an absorption so complete that distinctions between the categories of lived and represented or symbolic experience are rendered irrelevant, the quality of the former being knowable only in terms of a relation to the latter:

... it is a part of damnation to experience desires that we can no longer fulfil. For in Dante's Hell souls are not deadened as they mostly are in life; they are actually in the greatest torment of which each is capable. ('Dante', p. 166)

In hell, and in the Dantean schema generally, states of being can be conceived of only in terms of a structure of degrees of proximity to god or 'excellence in damnation' (p. 166). Such 'degrees' exist not as 'mystical experiences' considered valuable because they connote 'a pleasant state of unique intensity' (p. 170), but because they partake of a '*perceived*' (p. 171) relation between the allegorical creation and a philosophy (itself differentiated from extrinsic 'theory') which exists as 'the divine... the necessary, if paradoxical, limit of this contemplation' (p. 170).<sup>32</sup> As a 'serious and practical means of making the spiritual visible' ('Dante II', p. 229) allegory operates for Eliot by asserting simultaneously a distance from and a translucent relation to the truths it aspires to convey, establishing relational hierarchies which decree that 'Every degree of the feeling of humanity, from lowest to highest, has... an intimate relation to the next above and below' (p. 230).

It is only in the *augmentation* of these relations by art that creativity can legitimately inhere for Eliot, the sort of authorised creativity that he recognised in its vestigial form in 'the last' of the great critics, Coleridge, whose idea of the 'symbol', for instance, in predicating 'the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal' realised a grounding, layering and hierarchy in modes of representation that had vanished by the time of the Arnoldian notion of a 'culture' in which meaning was allowed to float free in the realms of rhetoric and 'propaganda'.<sup>33</sup> Underpinned by a system of

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32. Eliot would write during a discussion of Pound in *After Strange Gods* that 'It is in fact in moments of moral and spiritual struggle depending upon spiritual sanctions, rather than in those "bewildering minutes" in which we are all very much alike, that men and women come nearest to being real' (p. 42).

33. I refer back to my earlier reference to Eliot's juxtaposition of these critics in 'The Perfect Critic', p. 50. The quotation from Coleridge is taken from the discussion of the parallel between the function of the symbol in art and the scriptures in 'The Statesman's Manual' in *Coleridge's Works: Biographia Literaria and Two Lay Sermons* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1904), pp. 307-367, p. 322. Lengthy passages of this work appear to be followed closely in Eliot's own writings on modes of representation. However, the subordinate status of allegory and metaphor to symbol in the writings of Coleridge is actually inverted by Eliot in a rewriting that attempts to shift the former's metaphysical concerns from their proximity to 'an affair of his emotions' to a position in which the critic or artist can be seen 'have no emotions except those immediately



cultural meanings which are allegorically precedent to it, and to which its forms are 'translucent', Eliot's own orientations towards the historical function of language in culture turn on this point: that a certain use of language and poetics can avoid the cultural coding of language by constantly authorising their forms allegorically and presenting its language not in terms of an initiation, but as an augmentation of 'a meaning that it does not itself constitute'.<sup>34</sup>

In the opposition between a humanist culture whose Renaissance nascency produced the 'provincial' humanism that contaminated the Shakespearean word, and a mediaeval cosmos which finds its most potent expression in Dante, Eliot's ideals of poetic language and belief manifest themselves as a structure of authority that establishes 'a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life', as opposed to what he would later define as 'the disintegration of culture' resultant upon the divorce of the religious and the artistic sensibility.<sup>35</sup>

As 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' shows, the author, too, must aspire to a condition of allegorical transparency. 'The progress of an artist' necessitates '... the continual extinction of personality' (p. 40), just as the true condition of poetry demands 'an escape from emotion' (p. 43). What results is a critique of the notion of the development of a tradition that is dependent upon the primacy of the individual 'initiating' author, in favour of a tradition which might be able to perceive itself and its 'styles' only in relation to past acts of foundation - as Dante proclaimed of Virgil, the *auctor* of Roman destiny, at the opening of *The Divine Comedy*,

You are my master, and indeed my author;  
It is from you alone that I have taken  
The exact style for which I have been honoured.<sup>36</sup>

The essay on tradition, and the critical essays that are more contemporaneous with *The Waste Land*, do not emphasise the later overtly theological elements in Eliot's poetics, but rather work to

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provoked by a work of art - and these... when valid, perhaps not to be called emotions at all' ('The Perfect Critic', p. 56). As Erik Svarny has shown, Eliot's verse actually has a primary impulse towards symbolist or symbolic modes (identifiable in the poetry from *Prufrock* onwards) that was 'deflected' by Pound's influence, only to reassert itself after *The Waste Land*; see Svarny, *The Men of 1914: T. S. Eliot and Early Modernism* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: The Open University Press, 1988), p. 218 and p. 230.

34. I take this phrase from de Man's treatment of allegory in 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', p. 189; de Man actually inverts Coleridge's 'mystification' of the symbol by asserting the 'allegorical' distance of *any* correspondence between language, interpretation and the empirical world. Similarly, Jonathan Culler calls the distanciation that allegory provides between signifier and signified a 'demystification' of the ideologies of unity that the concept of the symbol connotes (see Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975], pp. 229-30); what I wish to stress here and in my subsequent discussion is the authoritative *valorisation* of this very distance that Eliot's poetics attempt.

35. Quotations are taken from 'What Dante Means to Me', in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 125-35, p. 128, and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, p. 26.

36. *The Divine Comedy*, p. 49 (Inferno I, 85-87).

determine the 'negative' literary categories by which the poem will function in order to assert its own revaluations of culture. The period of *The Waste Land* marks the point where Eliot's early poetry, with its concentration upon broad themes of self-doubt and the inauthenticity of convention and modern culture ('Prufrock', 'Preludes' and 'Portrait of a Lady' all date from 1910) transforms itself into direct meditations on the nature of religious experience and theological authority (*Ash Wednesday*, 1930, 'Burnt Norton', 1935 - and 'East Coker' in which Eliot insists that 'the poetry does not matter' [*Complete Poems*, p. 179]). *The Waste Land's* infra-structure is maintained by allusions to and citations of ancient and modern literature, legend, occult symbols, classical and fertility myths, Eastern religion and the Bible. Reference to literary or other cultural forms which surfaced in English history between the times of Milton (the personification of the final schism between self, church and state for Eliot) and modernity, however, are scant in the poem's archives (although other historically 'intermediate' references do exist - to Tennyson and Oliver Goldsmith for instance - usually only other and slightly earlier, 'moderns' or moderns outside the English tradition are interpellated: Wagner, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Stravinsky, de Nerval).

In contrast to the published poem, Eliot's criticism constantly makes reference to this 'omitted' period in English literary history. Like the consolidation of modern culture itself, the onset of provincialism in English poetry can be located in what Eliot judges to be the fall into 'artificiality' of Milton's verse, itself a symptom of the famous 'dissociation of sensibility', or fissure between the nature of experience and the quality of its expression from within an 'objective' framework which occurred in the seventeenth century, and of which Milton's poetics are both symptom and epitome.<sup>37</sup> Later, in 1936, Eliot would be specific about Milton's failings, claiming that the effects of his poetry were 'artificial and conventional' because of their restrictedly 'sensuous' appeal which makes demands 'entirely on the ear', 'a verbal music' rather than a poetry which necessitated the 'demand of sense'. Eliot considered the quality of Milton's figures similarly unrigorous and unspecific - 'The imagery in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is all general... Milton writes English like a dead language',<sup>38</sup> or a language in which a self-sufficiency, signalled by the easy movement of its associations, had rendered it 'opaque' to precedent relations.

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37. See 'The Metaphysical Poets' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 59-67, p. 64 and p. 66. Dominic Manganiello rightly considers this 'dissociation' to express 'Eliot's... idea of a metaphoric fall' (see Manganiello, *T. S. Eliot and Dante* [Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989], p. 133); for a general discussion of the dependence of modernist doctrine upon notions of a cultural 'dissociation' see the final chapter of Frank Kermode's *Romantic Image* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986).

38. See 'Milton I' in *Selected Prose*, pp. 258-264, pp. 260-261.



Before the degeneration of language heralded by the poetry of the 'ear' and 'heart', however, Metaphysical aesthetics had looked into 'the cerebral cortex, the nervous system and the digestive tracts' ('Metaphysical Poets', p. 66) for the impulses that generated their writing. What is hinted at here is the documented Renaissance sense of a need to begin to build from fundamentals ('the digestive tracts') a system of reference which could re-map the mind and body within expanding fields of knowledge (philosophy, anatomy) and negotiate within poetics this new relation to the (divine) macrocosm.

Metaphysical poetry testifies to this in part through the 'difficulty' of its stressed tropes and the attention to detail it insists upon as it strives to form 'new wholes' that will convey the complexity and heterogeneity of sensed change as it struggles for expression and relation in language ('Metaphysical Poets', p. 64 and p. 65). The Metaphysicals, at this point in Eliot's readings of literary history, stand upon a border between two cultures (later to be defined in the 'Dante' essay) in which certain tensions and violences in the aesthetic experience of the world are apparent, symptomatised in Donne's poetics, for instance, by 'disjunctions' and the 'sudden contrast of associations' that re-drawn analogical relations between the self, the world and the divine demand.<sup>39</sup>

Succeeding where humanist culture would fail, Metaphysical poetry takes developing aspects of its own culture and figuratively reinscribes them within prior religious frames. Instead of a poetic which fractures under the strains of modernity, the Metaphysicals harness its images in order to provide new allegorical depths to a religious foundation. Excelling in a poetic in which 'the idea' and its 'objectification' in structured figures, as in Dante, 'become one', this poetry is *already* characterised by the asymmetric tensions of modernity through 'the failure of the conjunction, the fact that often the ideas are yoked but not united' (pp. 60-61).

If the Metaphysical 'mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by reading and thought' then their aesthetics show the tension between an expanding humanist sensibility and the impulse to unity that theological foundation demands. It is here that humanism begins to pull at the theological anchor

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39. This analogical re-embedding of the self can actually be seen to occur in the example that Eliot gives (Donne's 'A Valediction of Weeping'). The spatial movements of the poem - from the lovers' emotions, to their reflection in tears, to distant shores, to the globe, to the moon and winds which influence the elements and thus 'overflow' these discrete 'worlds' - are especially apparent in a full reading; see *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, edited by C. A. Patrides (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985), pp. 84-5.

of thought and language, and from here on in cultural history, the formation of meaning will occur, for Eliot, to the accompaniment of a certain violence.<sup>40</sup>

Such, Eliot suggests, should have been the case. That humanism has betrayed this necessary 'violence' at the heart of modern existence is proved by the symptoms of autonomous cultural discourses (artificial, conventional) in which the sensuous ear and the sentimental personality become primary (Eliot cites a particularly bland passage from Tennyson to reinforce his point that something qualitative 'happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne... and the time of Tennyson' - 'Metaphysical Poets', p. 64) and the need for the artist 'to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning' (p. 65) is no longer apparent. It is precisely a renewed need for complex poetry to meet 'the great variety and complexity' (p. 65) of modern civilisation as Eliot sees it, that attests to the crisis of an 'artificial' cultural authority that has for so long dissimulated and denied it.

In 1920, a year before the theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' appeared, and a year after the notion of the 'objective correlative' had been brought to bear on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, an essay on Swinburne had conflated the themes of subjectivism, the malaise of meaning, and a cult of the word 'opaque' with its own self-sufficient associations:

It is, in fact, the word that gives him the thrill, not the object. When you take to pieces any verse of Swinburne, you find that the object was not there - only the word...

... Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified.

They are identified in the verse of Swinburne solely because the object has ceased to exist, because the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment...

... Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne.<sup>41</sup>

This 'dwelling among words' is precisely the sign of 'uprootedness' for Eliot while, tellingly, Pound would consider one of the thrusts of Swinburne's verse to witness 'a magnificent passion for liberty'.<sup>42</sup> Eliot would see similarly deracinated and individuated signs of 'genius' in William Blake, whose idiosyncratic mythologising he regards as an attempt at creativity *ex nihilo*, attempted at the expense of the 'classical' qualities that might emerge from works more embedded in the 'framework' of their traditions and environment:

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40. The ideal tension that Eliot locates between the individual self and its sense of the world is communicated well in 'The Metaphysical Poets' when Eliot cites a passage from George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* where the self occurs only as a difference from its greater other, to which it must submit with humility: 'Not plucking from the whole his wretched part / And into straits or into nought revert, / Wishing the complete Universe might be / Subject to such a rag of it as he; / But to consider great Necessity.' (p. 63)

41. 'Swinburne as Poet' in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, pp. 323-327, pp. 326-7.

42. Pound, 'Swinburne Versus his Biographers', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 290-94, p. 294; Pound would contend that Swinburne 'kept alive some spirit of paganism and of revolt in a papier-maché era' (p. 293).



The concentration resulting from a framework of mythology and theology and philosophy is one of the reasons why Dante is a classic, and Blake only a poet of genius. The fault is perhaps not with Blake himself but with the environment which failed to provide what such a poet needed...<sup>43</sup>

Significantly, the environment in which such a condition of groundless artistry occurs is England at the time of the French Revolution, a period in which the secularisation of European society consolidated and legitimated the projects of the Enlightenment which finally dismantled the framework of the medieval theological cosmos. Whereas Pound considered Dante to configure 'the culmination of one age rather than the beginning of the next', the fall of art and belief from a condition of Dantean 'augmentation' signalled the end, not the beginning of art and culture for Eliot. There is a sense in which Eliot's criticism is an attempt to deconstruct the legitimacy of subsequent modern culture, and from this backdrop of criticism *The Waste Land* emerges in the form of a negative, an entity that aspires to be undetermined by more than 200 years of history.

### Poetics Against Aesthetics

The values of humanism, Eliot's criticism insists, overlay a precedent Christian culture as artificial or 'monstrous' deviations from its authority. Where this authority was once mediated by belief, theology, and allegorical literary forms, the nineteenth century saw literature and culture finally attain an opacity to that which lay beneath or beyond it and acquire a 'singular life of its own' ('Swinburne as Poet', p. 327). Eliot's remedy to this 'opacity' lies not in any 'order' of art or language, but in their capitulation to Christian orthodoxy - a 'paraliterary mode of authority'.<sup>44</sup> Such orthodoxy would not fully emerge in Eliot's poetry until after *The Waste Land*, but in the original draft of this poem an exploration of an orthodox anti-aesthetic occurs which often takes the form of a direct assault upon Poundian aesthetic principles of 'de-authorisation'.

The draft of *The Waste Land* opens with a monologue that show-cases an aspect of 'de-based' modern culture. Set amid the night-life of early twentieth-century Boston (the piece is easily located and dated by references to places, songs, etc.) it recounts a drinking spree that includes trips to shows and clubs or brothels.<sup>45</sup> The draft continues with the familiar inversion of the values of nature imagery - 'April is the cruellest month...' - which dissolve into contemporary and genteel European voices at

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43. 'William Blake', *Selected Essays*, pp. 317-322, p. 322.

44. I take the quoted phrase from Perry Meisel's discussion of *The Waste Land* in *The Myth of the Modern*, p. 89.

45. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, p. 5; subsequent references to the facsimile will be indicated in the text by the term *Draft* followed by a page number.

leisure in more picturesque environments. What might be a unifying voice or commentary overseeing the opening montage then rhetorically asks:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter...<sup>46</sup>

The 'stony rubbish' to which this address refers originally passed implicit judgement upon more than the disjunct opening lines of the poem, for its ponderous questions followed one extensive and one fragmented representation of contemporary culture at 'leisure'. The hieratic 'Son of man' in the published version performs no such function directly, but establishes the oxymoronic figure of 'stony rubbish' as an image which will branch into an opposition between 'substantial' ascetic symbols of spiritual dearth and quest (the rock, the desert) culminating in the religious and ascetic tones of 'What the Thunder Said',<sup>47</sup> and an insubstantial 'litter' that signifies contemporary culture and the 'waste' of its discarded 'testimony of summer nights' ('empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends', lines 177-9).<sup>48</sup>

This opposition actually draws attention away from the intertext that gives rise to the first authoritative address and first annotation of the published poem, as the source of 'Son of man' is the book of Ezekiel. This first accredited 'borrowing' constitutes an adoption of the voice of god - 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet' being the words spoken to Ezekiel by the spirit of God before the spirit itself enters him and gives him the mandate to speak to the 'rebellious children of Israel'. The identity of the voice of God and the voice of Ezekiel is consummated in scripture by the latter's eating of a 'roll of a book' which is given to him with the words 'Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them' qualified by the warning that though it is not a 'strange speech' and a 'hard language' that Ezekiel has ingested, the Israelites, in their state of rebellion, 'will not hearken to thee' (Ezekiel 2, verses 3 and 4-7).

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46. *Draft*, p. 7, and Eliot's *Complete Poems*, p. 61, lines 19-23; subsequent references to the published version of the poem will be given by line-number only.

47. Eliot would write to Bertrand Russell of 'What the Thunder Said' that 'It gives me great pleasure to know that you like *The Waste Land*, and especially Part V. which in my opinion is not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole at all' (letter of 15th October 1923, cited in the *Draft*, p. 129).

48. Maud Ellmann considers this sense of 'waste' in *The Waste Land* to pronounce it an 'abject' text, or a work which is reluctant to fully 'abject' (cast-out) or expel its sense of waste and excess in order to define its own values and limits; see Ellmann, 'Eliot's Abjection', in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Works of Julia Kristeva*, edited by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 178-200.



As Eliot's criticism had shown, inarticulacy, 'broken images' and 'difficulty' can occur under the sign of 'authorised' language ('poets in our civilization... must be *difficult*') as other methods now usurp the 'narrative method' (such as opens the original draft) which, along with other facile utterances ('I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter') now signal only impoverishment. The authority of the poem's own 'strange speech' will constantly collapse the 'detail' of the contemporary into apocalyptic, transcendent and ahistorical perspectives ('I will show you fear in a handful of dust.', line 30; 'I Tiresias... / Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest...', lines 218 and 229) and disallow anything but a 'thwarted' aesthetics - an unachieved emotional symbolism and a failure of the senses that is represented by silences, blindnesses, inactions and non-communications:

... when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed... (lines 37-39)

Although these passages ('Looking into the heart of light, the silence', line 41) anticipate the symbolism of Eliot's later verse, these apparent gestures towards allegorical vision remain a dramatic expression of emptiness, and by failing to achieve development in the opening montage, subsist only as a desire for significance which the published poem will constantly defer.<sup>49</sup> That which does find development appears marginal and ironic -

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,  
Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe... (lines 43-5)

and a montage of disjointed observations and utterances - often literally deprived of 'authoritative' basis - becomes the substance of the poem:

And upside down in air were towers  
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours  
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells. (lines 382-4)

The symbolically ungrounded, exhausted or 'inverted' depths, foundations and icons of authority ('towers') suggest simultaneously the 'de-based' condition of modernity and the perversion of a precedent tradition and culture. This symbolism (of things upright now inverted, broken or dead) is diffused throughout, and will recur forcefully in the closing montage with the line '*Le Prince*

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49. *The Waste Land* persistently thwarts any clear private or moral symbolism or allegorical correspondence. Erik Svarny discusses this indeterminacy between symbolic and allegorical modes of language as an 'instability' of the poem's figures which suggest that in 'failing a Classical mode of authority' they become doomed 'to mediate a private idea' and/or the 'emotion of the poet' (*The Men of 1914*, p. 206). This instability, however, or the 'difficulty' of realising meaning in either mode, paradoxically enhances the poem's authority, and perhaps indicates the point where Eliot's 'difficulty' and Pound's precept that in conditions of crisis the artwork must occur outside or 'beneath' its age's conventions gel, momentarily show-casing the cutting edges of both poets.



*d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*' (line 429)<sup>50</sup> and help to recover even the most obscure of the poem's references within overarching apocalyptic oppositions.

Other fields of opposition were at work in the draft of the poem, however, and especially those that describe an anti-aesthetic, but in the published version these are apparent mainly as traces - at the opening, for instance, of 'A Game of Chess':

... the glass...  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion.  
In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid - troubled, confused  
And drowned the sense in odours... (lines 78-89)

The oppositions between 'stone' and 'rubbish', asceticism and 'leisure' had worked to imply the artificiality of contemporary culture in the opening sections of the draft, but another aspect of 'artifice' is explored through the sensuality of this opening. The lavish description of an interior here echoes the portrayal of Cleopatra's barge in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, but fails to take up its love/nature theme,<sup>51</sup> concentrating instead on the 'sickness', confusion or 'drowning' of sense that such a sumptuous environment occasions with its ornaments, perfumes and reflections.

The sensual 'drowning' of the self and the inarticulate self aware of the 'difficulty' of expression are antithetic for Eliot, and this opposition warrants extensive treatment in the poetry. Odours and other sensory stimulants which paradoxically 'blunt' the senses had been present as indices of annulling moods or conditions of consciousness in Eliot's poetry since the 'etherised' evening that opened the diffident *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Significantly, in this earlier poem the vacillating and uncertain nature of the consciousness it depicts was exacerbated by the presence of women - 'Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?' (*Complete Poems*, p. 15). Certain conceptions of the 'female' (and especially the female *author*) would come to announce the threat of confusion and decadence for both Eliot and Pound, the latter having written ambiguously in *Maunderley* of Lady Valentine's

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50. Taken from a sonnet entitled 'El Desdichado' ('The Disinherited' or 'The Misfortunate') by Gérard de Nerval, *The Waste Land* appropriates its themes of loss and uncertainty, and its concern with the insubstantiality of belated authorship, for de Nerval writes in the wake of the mediaeval troubadours and their discontinued tradition (Eliot, taking his cue from Pound, might be implying that the tradition of the troubadours represents an historical instance of an authentic relation between art and religion); see *The Penguin Book of French Verse 3: The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Anthony Hartley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 96-7.

51. 'Purple the sails, and so perfumed that/The winds were love-sick with them' (William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, II, ii, lines 197-8; see *The Complete Works*, p. 1165).



Poetry, her border of ideas,  
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending  
With other strata  
Where the lower and higher have ending...  
(*Shorter Poems*, p. 196)

The female and the feminine in Pound's writing usually appears as deity, chaos, mere potentiality, or the conserver of masculine creativity. In Eliot's writing the female signifies in the related register of aesthetic threat and diversion (as in the draft of 'Death by Water' where a Siren-song will act to 'charm[ed] the senses' while the visionary poetic voice remains 'Frightened beyond fear, horrified past horror').<sup>52</sup>

In 'A Game of Chess' the derogatory associations of the 'artifice' of the female reinforces the confusion caused by 'synthetic' lights and odours. These clear, however, 'As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene' when the depiction of the mythic metamorphosis that attends the rape of Philomel is encountered:

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and all the world pursues,  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears. (lines 99-103)

In its setting in the poem the stressed clarity of the represented scene acts as a 'window' into time, dispelling the artificial and decadent atmosphere of the 'hushed' boudoir and asserting an 'inviolable' reaction to the consequences of sexual desire and violation. The woman enveloped in perfume and reflection is literally outshone by a representation of the metamorphosis of a woman raped and mutilated yet still able to communicate lusts that 'all the world pursues' with an 'inviolable' intertextual voice. This 'voice' itself evokes a complex web of associations in a literary tradition - a tradition that is simultaneously augmented and brought to a halt in the paratactic stutterings of the modern poem.<sup>53</sup>

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52. *Draft*, p. 59. As has already been noted, Eliot would present the 'distraction' from the spiritual path through female-erotic imagery in 'Ash Wednesday' (*Complete Poems*, p. 93). In tracing the development of the essentially 'Christian' Eliot Lyndall Gordon states baldly that in *The Waste Land* 'woman... becomes an emblem of the decadent natural [unspiritual] world which should be abandoned or dismissed' (*Eliot's Early Years*, p. 108). For Eliot, as well as Pound, the female would occasionally be configured as the 'mediator' of art - see for instance his comments on Dorothy Wordsworth in 'Wordsworth and Coleridge' (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* [London: Faber and Faber, 1933], pp. 67-85, p. 70). On the function of gender in Eliot's writing see Koestenbaum's 'Collaboration on Hysteria', Larrissy's *The Language of Gender and Objects*, chapter 3, and Tony Pinkney's *Women in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot: A Psychoanalytic Approach* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1984), chapter 3.

53. The portrayal of the rape of Philomel is embedded in a past tradition of representation through the poem's direct reference to Ovid and Milton (in *Paradise Lost* book IV, the prelapsarian 'Silvan scene' of Eden unfolds itself to the visiting Satan where, significantly, 'native' as opposed to synthetic perfumes and odours abound; see *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited by H. C. Beeching [London and New York: Henry Frowde, 1904], p. 250). More subtly, there exists submerged and self-reflexive references to the 'representation' of this rape as it was the reading matter of Imogen in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, while her room (again significantly, not filled with strange perfume but perfumed by 'her breathing') contained a tapestry depicting 'Proud Cleopatra' amid 'The press of boats' (see Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, II, ii,

As the comparative fulness and clarity of the mythic scene undercuts the superficiality and confusion of the room it appears in, it also points up its own failure to resonate within or augment the *cul-de-sacs* of meaning that the poem has presented so far. The song of the nightingale is debased by 'dirty ears'; art perishes and its continuity of reference is 'hushed' and truncated, past representations becoming mere 'withered stumps of time' (line 104) that ornament an interior.

The mythic scene, and the rape it presents, appear to find their modern echo only in the mechanical intercourse of the bank clerk and typist that appear in the next published section. However, the scene that separates these two 'rapes' in different registers is itself significant. Eliot's granting of a 'voice' to the violated Philomel contrasts starkly with the inarticulate exchange presented here, but the theme of sexuality and brutality links them:

**HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME**

Now Albert's coming back...

He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth...

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique...

I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,

It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said. (lines 141-159)

Themes of marriage, violation and oral disorder suggest a 'parallel' to Philomel's mutilation. However, these discrete violations, though separate in both tone and time, can be seen to be related in other ways, and most forcefully in the shared concern for 'clarity' with which they appear in the text. The stressed definition of the Philomel scene (illustrative of the violence implicit at the core of the sexual urge that 'all the world pursues') militates against the confused 'artifice' of its setting. Similarly, the dramatically 'impersonal' mediation of the bar-room abortion/rape, with its aversion to the 'synthetic' and 'unnatural' ('The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same', line 161) is starkly different from the self-regarding 'neurotic' passages which precede it, suggesting that both 'rape' scenes exist in opposition to the section's generalised theme of confusion, inarticulacy, artifice and surfaces. Even the subtle incongruities of the colloquial idiom ('You ought to be ashamed... to look so antique') suggest a

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lines 18-19 and lines 45-6 and II, iv, lines 70-73 [*Complete Works*, p. 1207 and p. 1210], and the discussion of this allusion in *Reading 'The Waste Land': Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* by Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley [Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990], pp. 114-5). Further, through the image of the nightingale and the accompanying word 'sylvan' there is reference to the poetry of Keats - whose 'Ode to a Nightingale' presents (like Eliot's representation of Philomel) the nightingale's song as immortal, retaining its form throughout history (see *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, edited by H. Buxton Forman [London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1908], p. 232). Patrick D. Murphy writes of other allusions to Keats here which 'function as critical polemics against romanticism'. He sees Philomel as a woman who does *not* resign herself passively to her fate but seeks revenge and purification - as the 'inviolable' voice of the nightingale suggests, and Murphy considers her manifestation in *The Waste Land* to signify a transcendence of sensualised and romanticised violence such as is portrayed in Keats' 'dionysian revelry' witnessed by a 'sylvan historian' in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'; see Patrick D. Murphy, 'Eliot's polemic with Keats in *The Waste Land*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 24, 1 (1988), pp. 91-3.



'dislocation' in the language that, according to Eliot's values, lends this section the kind of historical integrity that features in language when it exists in a state of tension with the world it attempts to record. Between the Philomel and bar-room sections tragic parallels come into play whose significance lie, apparently, in the profundity of their violence.

Elements which suggest a connection between these scenes seem tenuous, and their function in the poem uncertain, but this uncertainty is resolved to a great extent by a reading of the corresponding section in the draft of the poem, in which a lengthy imitation of Pope's mock-heroic style (most traces of this style, dominant in the draft, are expunged from the final version) begins 'The Fire Sermon'. This section was placed immediately after that which contains the 'Philomel' and 'bar-room' scenes cited above, and functions to draw some of the themes that emerge from these sections together.

The fragmentary form of the published version is subdued in the narrative developments of the draft, whose main concern seems to be to negate modern culture rather than assert the authority of precedent traditions. One version of the section in question, before editing by Pound, begins,

Admonished by the sun's inclining ray,  
And swift approaches of the thievish day,  
The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes,  
Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes. (Draft, p. 23)

While Fresca functions in *The Waste Land* as an embodiment of superficiality and sensory nullity, her dream of 'pleasant rapes' provides a crucial context through which the significance of the published 'rape' scenes can be reassessed.

If the mythic Philomel remained 'inviolable' in the published poem, then the 'Fresca' of the draft is beneath redemption. The condition of dreaming, focused by the adverb 'pleasant', provides a perspective on violation which contains neither the clarity nor the violence of the published 'rape' and 'abortion' pieces, projecting onto them a 'realist' integrity that is unavailable to the reader of the published poem. The Fresca passages of the draft go on to present the entry of a 'plebeian' maid, and then Fresca's defecation while reading an eighteenth century novel:<sup>54</sup>

Fresca slips softly to the needful stool,  
Where the pathetic tale of Richardson

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54. The maid's 'coarsened hand, and hard plebeian tread' will help emphasise an opposition, homologous in this case with distinctions of class, between the 'hardness' of an existence that must confront the brutality of modern living (such as that depicted in the published bar-room scene) and the insubstantiality of Fresca's luxury and 'culture'. According to Eliot's iconography the typist and her *petit bourgeois* partner in 'The Fire Sermon' would inhabit an indeterminate position (thus all the more sordid) between the plebeian and the cultured. Contrary to most readings, I take Eliot's portrayal of the working class here to function as a positive element in the poem's judgemental apparatus (for the opposite view see for instance Alison Tate, 'The Master-Narrative of Modernism: Discourses of Gender and Class in *The Waste Land*', *Literature and History*, 14 [1988], pp. 160-71).

Eases her labour till the deed is done.

Here the 'pathetic tale of Richardson' suggests an opposition between an (excremental) 'modern' novelistic tradition whose concerns lay in an exploration of issues of selfhood, morality and virtue in a secular context, and the 'classical' values which are still latent in Eliot's pastiche of eighteenth-century couplets. The suppressed concerns of such a tradition become dismissively yoked to the 'artifice' of the female a few lines later as Fresca, having read in bed a letter of vacuous society and *belles-lettrist* 'chatter', rises:

This ended, to the steaming bath she moves,  
Her tresses fanned by little flutt'ring loves;  
Odours, confectioned by the eunning French,  
Disguise the good old female-stench/hearty female stench.  
artful

In the contrast between the brutality of the preceding sections and the artificial 'pleasant rapes' of the draft an opposition between artifice and authoritative representation emerges. Female artifice becomes an analogue of the hostility towards modern culture that Eliot's criticism displays, and the presence of the word 'artful' in the draft directly invokes the idea of an 'art' which can dissimulate a debased (female and cultural) condition. Specific examples of art now appear as sources for Fresca's 'Unreal' aesthetics of sense and culture:

For varying forms, one definition's right:  
Unreal emotions and real appetite.  
Women grown intellectual grow dull,  
And lose the mother wit of natural trull.  
Fresca was baptised/born upon a soapy sea  
Of Symonds - Walter Pater - Vernon Lee...  
From such chaotic misch-masch potpourri  
What are we to expect but poetry?  
When restless nights distract her brain from sleep  
She may as well write poetry, as count sheep...  
Fresca's arrived (the Muses Nine declare)  
To be a sort of can-can salonnière.  
But at my back from time to time I hear  
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear. (*Draft*, p. 27)

Fresca, like Pound's Lady Valentine, has poetry as a 'vocation' (*Shorter Poems*, p. 196), and the extended use of watery, faecal ('A doorstep dunged by every dog in town'), 'dull' and 'chaotic' metaphors to describe her condition and the condition from which her poetry emerges identifies her with what both Pound and Eliot would regard as decadent cultural influences.

However, in choosing a mock-divine birth for Fresca amid a late Victorian fluidity ('...baptised/born upon a soapy sea / Of Symonds - Walter Pater - Vernon Lee') Eliot is apparently launching an attack not only upon an aestheticist tradition whose precepts to some extent underpin



Pound's modernist programme (a tradition which Eliot would judge a 'confusion between life and art' which granted to aesthetics a 'living authority'), but upon an image of the emergence of the divine which had featured in and closed 'Three Cantos' I and III respectively (Aphrodite 'comes ashore on that great cockle-shell' and the sequence closes with her birth 'Light on the foam, breathed on by zephyrs'). The theme of divine birth continues when the draft allows a deified Fresca's re-entry - 'a Venus Anadyomene / She stept ashore...' - as a successful writer and 'star' of the cinema screen, a latter-day (artificial) deity of a (duped) 'sweating rabble' who 'Can-recognise a goddess or a star' by her 'smooth celestial pace' (*Draft*, p. 29).

Eliot's reference here is to Virgil's Venus in *The Aeneid* whose 'gait alone proved her a goddess'. However, as has been seen, this particular aspect of divine representation and identity had been, and would continue to be, one of the privileged hallmarks of theophanic and sensual recognition in Pound's poetry.<sup>55</sup> In order to deride the influence of a Paterian 'aesthetic religion' Eliot projects a specifically Poundian icon into the context of the modern mass-media, and implicates Poundian aesthetics, subliminally or explicitly, in the artificiality of the contemporary artform. In the light of this, Fresca's disappearance from the published text, and the expanded context that these passages provide for the other 'rape' scenes, can be seen as more a matter of Poundian anxiety than editorial economy - Pound's intervention removes Eliot's anti-aesthetics and reinforces the disjunctive, enigmatic and 'oracular' authority of *The Waste Land* at a stroke.

The next section of the published poem, 'The Fire Sermon', again juxtaposes 'couplings', the first of which, the sordid union of the typist and the young man 'carbuncular', ends with a parody of the 'Song' of the seduced Ophelia from Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (lines 253-6). The typist's actions fade out, like the Frescan screen goddess, in the context of a modern art-form (she 'puts a record on the gramophone'), and, if the reference to Goldsmith is followed, this recourse to art in order to disremember or disguise superficiality and carnality will similarly fail to 'wash her guilt away' - the only atonement for such an act being death.<sup>56</sup>

It is this proximity to death, and the insufficiency of art and modern 'aesthetics' to defer or disguise it (Fresca's poeticising ends with a Marvellian allusion to the 'rattle of the bones') which legitimises

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55. See *The Aeneid*, p. 40, and the discussion in chapter 2 of Pound's 'Nicea' whose 'long slender feet lit on the curb's marge'.

56. The first stanza from Goldsmith runs - 'When lovely woman stoops to folly, / And finds too late that men betray, / What charms can soothe her melancholy, / What art can wash her guilt away?', and ends by proclaiming that the 'only art her guilt to cover' is 'to die' (Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield, A Tale* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981], p. 133).

violence as the dominant signature of the modern aesthetic in its divorce from authoritative meaning for Eliot. This violence appears only in banal form in the union of the typist and clerk, but is present in the form of a danger that shadows and to some extent sanctifies the historically 'prior' union that the poem has recourse to in the figures of Queen Elizabeth and Lord Leicester.<sup>57</sup> This rendezvous, between a queen and a suitor is overshadowed by the 'White towers' (line 289) of the Tower of London. Dangers operate in this liaison in the form of tensions between the private and public roles of the queen, and love functions only as a relation to power - a power whose ultimate violence is suggested by the towers that contained a less fortunate suitor, the Earl of Essex. In Elizabethan England, the poem's symbolic hierarchies imply, authority had not yet been dissipated (~~'There are still~~ w/White Towers' proclaims the *Draft*, p. 49), but that this monarchic authority would soon be symbolically and actually lost with the execution of King Charles and the consolidation of a bourgeois revolution seems to be the point that this 'prelapsarian' liaison attempts to make in the poem's juxtaposition of historical authority and contemporary decline.

Violence and copulation act in *The Waste Land* not only as signs of mortality, but as indicators of the powers of a malformed aesthetics which threaten to supervene the structures of authority which can mediate this violence for the inhabitants of modernity. As it is, they remain consigned to a Dantean limbo - 'The inhabitants of Hampstead' being 'bound forever on the wheel' (*Draft*, p. 105).

Eliot's anxieties about the contamination of an art which might augment belief and authority by an artifice which subverts it, or fails to recognise the brutality of life lived in its absence, were necessarily expunged from *The Waste Land* by Pound, for they were anxieties which his own aesthetics of 'empowerment' had to negate. Eliot's anxious anti-aesthetic persists, however, in submerged intertexts of the published poem. Especially significant in this regard are the two explicit references to Saint Augustine that the poem makes at the end of 'The Fire Sermon':

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest (lines 307-9)

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57. Note that in the draft (p. 49) and in the notes to the published poem (*Complete Poems*, p. 70) Elizabeth and Leicester meet upon a 'barge', which, absent in the earlier reference to Cleopatra ('chair' is substituted for Shakespeare's 'barge') effectively fixes the opening of 'A Game of Chess' upon the end of 'The Fire Sermon', stressing the related concern in these sections with modes of sexuality, artificiality and authority.



The references which the notes to the poem provide indicate citations from Augustine's *Confessions*, the first of which reads 'I came to Carthage and all around me hissed a cauldron of illicit loves.'<sup>58</sup> Carthage as a debauched city adds another name to the historical centres of culture which the poem presents in the shadow of disintegrating symbols of authority: 'Falling towers / Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London / Unreal' (lines 373-6). The 'Unreal city' inverts the Poundian ideal of the 'timeless' city, and acts here as a metaphor for that which is built or augmented but exists, having no foundation, only as an appearance and a corruption of what is real, like Fresca's 'Unreal emotion' or a language which can offer only the 'hallucination' of meaning. In Augustine's text his subject is his seduction in such a city, and in describing the growing tension between his (unreal) bodily desires and his (real) spiritual needs, he makes recourse to an aesthetic analogy:

I was captivated by theatrical shows. They were full of representations of my own miseries and fuelled my fire. Why is it that a person should wish to experience suffering by watching grievous and tragic events which he himself would not wish to endure? (p. 35)

The uncertainty of the distinction between an authentic suffering and the suffering that is the enjoyment of its (unreal) representation raises questions about the integrity of the sense of self which had traditionally been the subject of the modern novel,<sup>59</sup> and that Eliot dismisses this artistic form in the draft of *The Waste Land* to turn to medieval theological authority again evidences a suppression of humanist culture and 'aesthetics' in favour of theological *fiat*. *The Waste Land* again delegates questions of aesthetics back to Saint Augustine by way of the second citation, 'O Lord Thou pluckest me out', directing the reader to a later book of the *Confessions*, which, like the first, conducts a discussion of the spiritual condition of the author with reference to artistic forms:

I resist the allurements of the eyes lest my feet are caught as I walk along your way. I lift up to you invisible eyes that you may 'rescue my feet from the trap' [this quotation from Psalms, 25, 15 echoes Eliot more closely if taken from the King James translation: 'Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net']...

... To entrap the eyes men have made innumerable additions to the various arts and crafts... and things which go far beyond necessary and moderate requirements and pious symbols. Outwardly they follow what they make. Inwardly they abandon God by whom they were made... the beautiful objects designed by artists' souls and realized by skilled hands come from that beauty which is higher... From this higher beauty the artists and connoisseurs of external beauty draw their criterion of judgement, but they do not draw from there a principle for the right use of beautiful things. The principle is there but they do not see it, namely that they should not go to excess, but 'should guard their strength for you'. (p. 210)

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58. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 35.

59. On the interrogation of the discrepancy between a 'true' and 'artificial' self in the novelistic tradition see the early chapters of Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

The passages which the poem points up constitute almost the only discussions of aesthetics in *Confessions*, and suggest *The Waste Land's* awareness that the force of its author's metaphysics depend, crucially, upon a denial of aesthetics which defines divine authority and its augmentation. Eliot's project proclaims itself an 'augmentation' of Augustine's orthodoxy in its wish to constrain the tendencies of art towards excess, superficiality, sensuality and autonomy, attempting to distinguish between those 'additions' to art which augment piety, and those which tend towards initiating an 'outward' following of mere artefacts, sensual hallucinations and an 'aesthetics' of religion.

This condemnation of the 'artifice' of sensualism is again apparent in the draft of *The Waste Land* in a section paginated after the ending of the poem proper. These pages, headed by the title 'The Death of Saint Narcissus',<sup>60</sup> which perhaps suggests the perversion of Christian authority by pagan elements, presents a portrait of an anti-martyr which invokes a distinction between an experience of the self in terms of a relation to the divine and the self as it becomes an aesthetic and sensual experience *for* itself:

He walked once between the sea and the high cliffs  
Where the wind made him aware of his legs smoothly  
    passing each other...  
He was stifled and soothed by his own rhythm...  
His eyes were aware of the pointed corners of his eyes  
And his hands aware of the tips of his fingers.  
Struck down by such knowledge  
He could not live men's ways, but became a dancer before God. (*Draft*, p. 95)

Here self-regard and auto-eroticism threaten to usurp the distance between the self and divinity - a distance emphatically denied in Pound's aesthetics and denied in the specific form of dance in 'Dance Figure'.<sup>61</sup> For Eliot, the adoration of God becomes with Narcissus a celebration of the sensual self complete in 'its own rhythm', expressing its delight through a performed dance *before* (suggesting itself as prior to, an affront to, and self-sufficient) the face of God. Earlier pages of the draft place this poem in the ambit of the references to Saint Augustine that the published poem contains:

To have writhed in his own clutch, his beauty  
    caught in the net of his own beauty (*Draft*, p. 93)

He could not live men's ways, but became a dancer to God.  
If he walked in city streets, in the streets of Carthage... (*Draft*, p. 91)

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60. This 'early' poem, incorporated into the draft of *The Waste Land*, is also published in the 'Poems Written in Early Youth' section of *Complete Poems*, pp. 605-6; see Lyndall Gordon's discussion of its motifs in *Eliot's Early Years*, pp. 91-5, and Gregory S. Jay's analysis in *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), pp. 102-7.

61. 'There is none like thee among the dancers; / None with swift feet' (Pound's *Shorter Poems*, p. 91). Eliot's refusal of dance is intimately related to his antipathy to (Dionysian) excess - as treated by Keats for example (see note 54).



The theme of self love is central to the fourteenth book of Saint Augustine's *The City of God*, where it functions to distinguish between two kinds of metaphorical city established by two kinds of love, one pre- and one post-lapsarian: 'the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self... the earthly city glories in itself.'<sup>62</sup> Augustine had earlier considered sexuality after the fall in terms of a manifestation of the chaotic spasms of the body once divorced from grace; Adam's fig-leaf covered erection becomes the primal sign of the lapse and the revolt against god and of the emergence of desire as it shifts from subjection to the 'will's authority' to the whims of lust and the devil. The body after the fall had 'lost the authority to which the body had been subordinate in every part'.<sup>63</sup> As sexual desire denotes the advent of the fall, so the aesthetic and bodily self-sufficiency of dance can be seen to symbolise the transgression of a self-regarding and lustful body, the body which has taken on, like language in Eliot's scheme, 'a singular life of its own' that is in excess of any authority external to it. Indulging itself and flaunting the discipline that should chasten it, it aligns itself closely with the theatricality of pagan worship against which Augustine defines the correct augmentation of god's works through piety.<sup>64</sup>

'The Death of Saint Narcissus' goes on to echo the themes of rape and metamorphosis that feature in the published poem, signalling a distinction between 'significant' and self-regarding transformation and violation. This degenerates into sensualism, auto-eroticism and a confused self-rape in the penultimate section of the draft, which includes a self-transformation which directly parallels metamorphic themes in Pound's early poetry and here becomes entangled in its own 'rootlessness':

First he was sure that he had been a tree  
Twisting its branches among each other  
And Tangling its roots among each other.

Then he knew that he had been a fish  
With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers...

Then he had been a young girl  
Caught in the woods by a drunken old man

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62. Saint Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, translated by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 593.

63. *The City of God*, pp. 582-3. See also Michel Foucault's discussion of the fourteenth book of this work in an article co-authored with Richard Sennett, 'Sexuality and Solitude' in *London Review of Books: Anthology One* (London: Junction Books, 1981), pp. 165-183, pp. 174-6.

64. See *The City of God*, pp. 63-5. The 'dance' of Saint Narcissus bears an uncanny resemblance to the concerns raised in Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel *Brave New World*, published nine years after *The Waste Land*. Huxley's protagonist, anachronistically deriving his moral values and beliefs from a marriage of Shakespeare, Christianity and paganism, finds it impossible to live in a post-Fordist, hedonistic and genetically regulated world, and hangs himself after an act of self-mortification is transformed into an orgy by the inhabitants of this dystopia. Huxley takes up a position on the status of art divorced from religion identical to the conservatism of Eliot in many of his prose works - see for instance 'The Substitutes for Religion' in *Proper Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927) pp. 207-229.

Knowing at the end the taste of her own whiteness  
The horror of her own smoothness,  
And he felt drunken and old.<sup>65</sup>

Literally containing the 'embodiment' and the consequences of self-regarding aesthetics and artifices which negate divine authority, Saint Narcissus presents a debased 'aesthetics' of humility and worship where martyrdom itself becomes aestheticised and eroticised:

So he became a dancer to God.  
Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows... (*Draft*, p. 97)

After parodying the death of Saint Sebastian, the sequence closes abruptly with an image more consistent with the ascetic symbols that feature in the published poem, both Narcissus and the section ending '... green, dry and stained / with the shadow in his mouth'. Here, perhaps, the theme of the sacrifice which ensures fertility, borrowed from Frazer and Jessie Weston, meets with Eliot's Christian iconography, but the religious rationale behind these 'mythic' concerns, along with the orthodox derogation of aesthetics which they contain, vanish in Pound's editorial activities as surely as the implicit critique of Poundian aesthetics that they articulate.

That the mythic and 'oracular' version of the poem which achieved publication was a product of Pound's editing is undeniable, for if *The Waste Land* was conceived by Eliot as what Hugh Kenner has called 'a somewhat loose medley' from which Pound 'eliminated everything not of the first intensity', then Pound also went against Eliot's urge to 'explicate' the poem by prefixing 'Gerontion' to it as a preface and a 'psychological' focus which might symbolically recuperate the text's fragmentariness as the author's 'dry thoughts in a dry season'.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the single most elucidatory section that the draft contained was the 'Fresca' passage, and with that and its ironic threat to the legitimacy of his own project removed, Pound had started clearing a site where disjunction and enigma could replace Eliot's orthodox but insidious anti-aesthetics.

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65. *Draft*, p. 97. These implicitly dismissive allusions to or anticipations of Poundian themes (Lyndall Gordon dates 'Saint Narcissus' to 1915) are quite striking. See for instance Pound's 'The Tree', 'A Girl', and the allusions to sensuality and metamorphosis in 'Dance Figure' - 'Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark... / White as an almond are thy shoulders...'. The reference to the fish in the passage from 'Saint Narcissus' cited here can be seen to depict a specific 'perversion' of Christian iconography while also negatively evoking Pound's use of 'the shadow of the fish' as an analogue for the movements of his sleeping-partner in 'Fish and the Shadow' (*Shorter Poems*, p. 166).

66. Pound insisted to Eliot that 'I do *not* advise printing Gerontion... One don't miss it AT all as the thing now stands' (see *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, p. 505). Eventually Tiresias would become the overlooker who 'sees... the substance of the poem' (*Complete Poems*, p. 78), acting to placate what Kenner calls the 'ghost' of the philosophy of F. H. Bradley as it haunted the poem with a desire for an experiential 'finite centre' which could recuperate its fragments and dispersals (these and previous quotations from Kenner are taken from *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* [London: Methuen, 1985], pp. 127-8).



Pound and Eliot's collaboration on *The Waste Land* sees the end of a period in which Eliot's impulses towards orthodoxy were subverted or re-directed by his mentor.<sup>67</sup> In insisting that *The Waste Land* remain obscure and fragmented Pound probably knew that he was stabilising and not undercutting the authoritative façade of the whole. The poem exists as one of Pound's more consequential reactions to orthodox authority, yet it is ironic that *The Waste Land* saw the 'accession' to 'cultural legitimacy' of English modernist poetics, for the 'fragments' that remain 'shored' against Eliot's ruins attain their status only because the anti-aesthetic and orthodox elements Pound 'shelved' dissembled the extremist principles of authority and aesthetics that actually feature in the modernist projects of Eliot and Pound. *The Waste Land* exists as an enigmatic compromise which misrepresented, but perhaps therefore rendered more acceptable, the doctrinal modernism of both poets.

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67. Svarny cites Pound's self-congratulatory poem which followed the caesarian 'delivery' of *The Waste Land* but stresses the preceding line ('... on each Occasion / Ezra performed the Caesarian Operation') in order to indicate that Eliot was solidly under Pound's tutelage from 1914-1922, when he broke the partnership and sought alliance with the 'dominant centre of English literary culture: the Bloomsbury group' (*The Men of 1914*, p. 230 and p. 225).

#### 4. Joyce and Pound: The Critical and Realigned Aesthetic

Eliot had reacted against the cultural ideals that were consolidated in the nineteenth-century by ridiculing Arnold's attempts to replace the authority of religion with the artistic products of humanism. Arnold's 'monstrous abuse of words' Eliot judged to be symptomatic of the dissociation of artistic representation from a foundation of Christian authority, and the central theme of the failure of art and language in Eliot's work presents itself as an index of this estrangement. Despite the apparent proximity of Pound's poetics of history and conviction of contemporary decadence to Eliot's modernism, the absence of authority, foundation and 'certainty' is a defining characteristic of the *paideuma*. Pound's placing of 'The essence of religion' into 'the *present* tense' clarifies the aesthetic distance between himself and Eliot - a distance Pound advertised when he wrote disparagingly of Eliot's 'monotheism'.<sup>1</sup>

It is this refusal of the 'weak' authority of belief which helps Pound towards a demarcation of his own poetics as the aesthetic 'assertion of a positive', for severance from orthodox authorities and 'certainties' reduce the possible frames of reference that his art can be seen to defer to, augment or elaborate. Thus Pound seeks progressively to suture the difference between art and 'life' precisely by the elimination of extrinsic authorities. In their place appear the uncertain but therefore all the more 'vital' functions of an art which is no more and no less than the vehicle of 'liberation' from orthodoxy and the positive articulation of emancipated human desire.

As has been shown, an early attempt to eliminate related aspects of authority from the 'positive' operations of art was made by Pound in *The Spirit of Romance* when he, like Eliot, reacted to the writings of Arnold. Attacking his precursor's liberal notion of literature as a 'regulator' of experience and action, Pound would militantly judge that 'If poetry be a part of literature... then his definition of

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1. 'Dr Williams' Position', p. 394.



literature as "criticism of life" is the one notable blasphemy that was born of his mind's frigidity'.<sup>2</sup> If art is to be 'the assertion of a positive', then it can only be 'frigidly' conceived in terms of an authority to which life is accountable, and, as the passage which follows his promotion of poetry as a 'positive' shows, this can be consolidated by declaring an 'instinctive' difference between the functions of literary genres:

Most good poetry asserts something to be worth while, or damns a contrary; at any rate asserts emotional values. The best prose is, has been a presentation (complicated and elaborate as you like) of circumstances, of conditions, for the most part abominable... This assertion of the more or less objectionable only becomes doctrinaire and rotten art when the narrator misstates from dogmatic bias, and when he suggests some quack remedy (prohibition, Christianity, social theory of one sort or another)... ('Henry James', p. 324)

Here Pound is implicitly distinguishing his own project from 'analytic' prose, from what he would come to regard as the 'doctrinaire' basis of Eliot's Christianity, and the 'critical' negativity of Arnold's 'social theory' alike.<sup>3</sup> The passage characteristically overstates the 'root difference' between the genres, but his observation that prose can be seen to serve an essentially discursive and 'critical' function, while the condensations of poetry most effectively 'assert emotional values' echoes an established distinction in criticism which has drawn political implications from these formal differences.

Pound might, for instance, concur with Hazlitt who suggested, when witnessing what he considered to be a late betrayal of the democratic cause by the 'Lake' poets, that the medium of prose requires reason and 'understanding', that in its insistence upon dialogue and the 'argument and explanation' incurred in 'measuring' and understanding its subject, democracy's 'natural' vehicle was prose. The imaginative 'exaggerating' and 'monopolising faculty' of poetic presentation, however, with its emphasis upon the presence of 'immediate or distinct images to the mind', Hazlitt considered to be anathema to democracy: with its 'gilt and blood-stained' ideals, he writes, 'The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power'.<sup>4</sup>

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2. *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 222; ultimately, however, Pound's rhetoric as well as Eliot's owes much to Arnold - see for instance the example of Arnold's inaugural lecture as Oxford Professor of Poetry cited in Bell's *Critic as Scientist*, pp. 287-8.

3. Significantly, Pound would dub his own 'negative' reassessment of poetics, *Mauberry*, 'a study in form, an attempt to condense the James novel' (*Letters*, p. 180).

4. William Hazlitt, 'Coriolanus', in *Selected Writings*, edited by Ronald Blythe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 284-8, pp. 284-5. Cairns Craig also uses this essay to trace a critical tradition which has judged the form and ideology of modern poetry to constitute a political degeneration, in terms first used by Frank Kermode, from the provisionality of 'fictions' into ideologically regressive 'myths' (see Craig, *Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry*, pp. 15-19 and p. 23, and Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967], pp. 39-40). More recently the dissemination of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin has proposed the idea that historical, social and political considerations are 'alien to poetic style'. Bakhtin inverts the values that Pound allots to poetry and prose by suggesting that poetry is 'monologic' as opposed to 'dialogic' (conditioned and relativised by dialogue) or 'heteroglossic' (in which meaning is allowed to be governed by diverse social and political contexts); see for instance Bakhtin's 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, edited by Michael

Pound's generic distinction concurs with these sentiments but, of course, inverts the political evaluation they propose - insisting that 'Properly, we shd. read for power', and easily agreeing that, like myth in its confrontation with conceptual thinking, 'poetry is totalitarian in any confrontation with prose'.<sup>5</sup> While recognising the 'clarifying' function that the prose tradition performs within language and political discourse (in 1917 he would state that 'It is very important that there should be clear, unexaggerated, realistic literature' and identify both the contemporary lack of representative government in Germany and the historical decline of the Roman Empire with an abundance of rhetoric and an absence of 'decent prose')<sup>6</sup> Pound would all too readily ascribe to its 'democratic' impulse a primarily ironic or satiric function. If in its modern form the authentic role of prose is merely the 'elimination' of 'something detestable', then the primary focus of this 'hatred' is modern democracy itself for Pound and the 'mimetic' realism that traditionally carried its values.

The epitome of 'good prose' thus flowed for him through the pen of Flaubert. The French author's studied excoriation of *petit bourgeois* life pronounced him 'the tragedian of democracy, of modernity', a writer who sought to reveal the shallowness and hypocrisy of his epoch and audience by presenting them with works like *Bouvard et Pécuchet* - 'l'Encyclopédie en farce' - and writing which, like 'most good prose', arose from 'an instinct of negation' or negative 'diagnosis'.<sup>7</sup>

This Flaubertian 'negation' of contemporary social life through a 'castigation of the word' was precisely the niche in English modernism that Pound hoped that James Joyce would fill. In the nineteen-thirties Pound would write of 'Joyce's influence' that it was 'sanitary', being 'almost exclusively Flaubert's influence, extended'.<sup>8</sup> Earlier Pound had declared that 'Messrs Bouvard and Pécuchet are the basis of democracy; Bloom also is the basis of democracy; he is the man in the street,

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Holquist, translated by Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 259-422, p. 285 and p. 298.

5. This is borne out by Pound's elision of the 'narrative' sections of the draft of *The Waste Land* in order to produce an 'impersonal' and enigmatic poem whose negotiation of its own authority is edited out.

6. From 'James Joyce', in *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce with Pound's Essays on Joyce*, edited by Forrest Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 88-91, p. 90; where an essay as distinct from a letter has been cited from this source it will be indicated by the essay title.

7. For the idea that 'Flaubert is diagnosis' see 'The Serious Artist', p. 45. Other quotations in this paragraph are taken respectively from Pound writing in the *Dial* 1922, cited in Forrest Read's essay 'Pound, Joyce, and Flaubert: The Odysseans' in *New Approaches To Ezra Pound: A Co-ordinated Investigation of Pound's Poetry and Ideas*, edited by Eva Hesse (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 125-144, p. 128, and 'James Joyce et Pécuchet' in *Pound/Joyce*, pp. 200-211, p. 201. For a discussion of Flaubert's literary project as a desire to 'transcend' the limited condition of his audience see chapters 4 through 6 of Mark Conroy's *Modernism and Authority: Strategies of Legitimation in Flaubert and Conrad* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). Significantly, the 'true Penelope' of Pound's own extended exercise in 'negative diagnosis', *Mauberley*, was Flaubert (*Shorter Poems*, p. 187).

8. From 'Past History' in *Pound/Joyce*, pp. 245-54, p. 252. Pound first compares Joyce to Flaubert in the 1914 essay 'Dubliners and Mr James Joyce' (*Pound/Joyce* pp. 27-30).



the next man, the public', and had taken Joyce's fictional character and the mundane Dublin *milieu* in which he was set as a thematisation and 'elimination' of democracy's shallow evils - insisting that *Ulysses* existed as 'a great work of Katharsis' which harangued 'this bitched mess of modernity'.<sup>9</sup>

Pound's inability to recognise in the prosaic Bloom or the complexities of Joyce's work generally anything but negation (or what Hugh Kenner has called a Flaubertian cataloguing of 'intellectual junk in an ecstasy of disgust')<sup>10</sup> reveals some of the cruder limitations that Pound's definition of the aesthetic prescribed. In many ways Joyce's works must be seen as a studied rejection of the aesthetic as Pound configured it, and a specific critique of its blindnesses and limits. This is most clearly seen in *Ulysses*, a novel whose composition progressively forced a wedge into the relationship between Pound and Joyce, opening a gulf that separated two radically divergent versions of the aesthetics and politics of modernism.

Joyce's early works appeared to conform to the Poundian conception of modern prose as the analysis of 'something which one wants to eliminate'. This elimination, in Joyce's case, involved nothing less than an engagement with the inauthenticity and banality of contemporary social discourses. In this sense his prose can be regarded as 'symptomatic' in its presentation of what is, in his own words, a fundamental 'paralysis' in modern life revealed through specific attention to the conventional constraints or 'styles' in which his characters are inscribed and articulated.<sup>11</sup> The free indirect speech and impersonal narrative stance - or narration refracted through the idiom of character - that is the signature and 'symptom' of Joyce's early fiction was labelled 'impressionism' by Pound, but an impressionism whose disciplined refusal to digress from 'exact presentation' of the idioms of the modern social subject made of it 'the most beneficial force in modern literature' ("*Dubliners*" and Mr James Joyce', pp. 27-8). As Kenner has suggested, Joyce's writing can be characterised as a 'double writing' in that 'the usual criterion of style, that it disappear like glass before the reality of the subject, doesn't apply to his pages'. Rather, a revelation of the power of discourse to define and 'embalm'

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9. The first quotation is taken from 'Ulysses', p. 403; *Ulysses* as 'katharsis' appears in 'Le Prix Nobel' in *Pound/Joyce*, pp. 216-221, p. 220. Later Pound would reiterate this theme in *Guide To Kulchur*, stating that "'Ulysses" is the end, the summary, of a period... JOB DONE and finished, the diagnosis and cure was here... the whole boil of the European mind, had been lanced', and extol the 'katharsis of "Ulysses"' (*Guide To Kulchur*, p. 96). Pound berates the 'bitched mess' of modernity in a 1918 letter to Joyce (*Pound/Joyce*, p. 148), a de-feminised rephrasing of which would recur two years later in the 'botched civilization' of *Mauberley* (*Shorter Poems*, p. 191).

10. Hugh Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 10.

11. In a famous letter which defended the 'indecenty' of *Dubliners* to his publisher Joyce wrote that 'My intention was to write a moral history of my country and I chose Dublin... because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis... I have written it for the most part in the style of scrupulous meanness...' (*Selected Letters of James Joyce*, edited by Richard Ellmann [London: Faber and Faber, 1975], p. 83).

subjectivity and sociality takes place, and Kenner's reading of such a method is directly derived from Pound's in its judgement that 'All his characters are walking clichés, because the Dubliners were'.<sup>12</sup>

For Pound it is the dialectic between this treatment of 'paralysis' and its artistic denial that generates the force of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where 'On almost every page... you will find... swift alternation of subjective beauty and external shabbiness, squalor and sordidness'.<sup>13</sup> Pound's sympathies lie with the symbolic struggle that Stephen Dedalus performs with the religious inertia of his country, his refusal of 'the power, the authority, to make the great God of Heaven come down upon the altar and take the form of bread and wine' that emerges as an unsubmitive artistic resolve to avoid 'nationality, language, religion' and 'fly by those nets' in the guise of 'the fabulous artificer' with the adopted Luciferian motto '*non serviam: I will not serve*':

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use - silence, exile, and cunning.<sup>14</sup>

The 'paralysis' of contemporary discourses and authorities as they comprise and are thematised by Joyce's texts are what the semi-autobiographical character of Stephen/Joyce will neither believe in nor serve. Pound could fully endorse these themes of 'de-authorisation' in Joyce's work; what he failed to discern, however, was that the Luciferian fall of Stephen out of orthodoxy and 'paralysis' into the fabulous realm of artifice would not be a fall away from the mundane, moralistic and sentimental 'shabbiness, squalor and sordidness' of Dublin life, but a plunge into it at a more 'vital' level:

He would fall. He had not yet fallen but he would fall silently...

... The faint sour stink of rotted cabbages came towards him from the kitchen gardens on the rising ground above the river. He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father's house and the stagnation of vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul. (*A Portrait*, p. 162)

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12. Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 12 and p. 11. Kenner elaborates this view of free indirect discourse in Joyce's writing in chapter 2 of *Joyce's Voices* (Faber and Faber: London, 1978). A totally different reading of Joyce's early method prevails in contemporary criticism, one epitomised by Colin MacCabe's re-reading of Joyce's free indirect style as the 'refusal of agreement between text and reader' which undercuts 'any hierarchy of dominance into which the reader could comfortably insert himself' (see MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* [London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979], pp. 30-31), or a reading which denies precisely the 'negative' judgement of character which Kenner and Pound assume. Kenner, however, remains one of the most illuminating critics of Joyce, and it is interesting to witness the revision of his (Poundian) attitude towards Joyce's work, and the character of Bloom in particular, which takes place later in his career. In the 1987 preface to the new edition of *Dublin's Joyce* (first published in 1956), for instance, Kenner states that 'I was wrong about Bloom... not yet understanding the tenacity of his virtues; wrong especially about Molly' (p. xii). The result of his reconsideration of Joyce can be found in his *Ulysses* (revised edition), (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

13. 'Joyce' in *Pound/Joyce*, pp. 133-141, p. 135.

14. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); quotations are taken from p. 158, p. 203, p. 169, p. 117 and p. 247 respectively.



This passage is significant in its promise not of a Flaubertian aesthetic disengagement from the stagnation and disorder of the Dublin that the artist inherits but of a re-focusing of the aesthetic precisely onto this environment. Joyce had hinted at the nature of this re-focusing through a reference to Flaubert made in the notes to *Exiles*:

Since the publication of the lost pages of *Madame Bovary* the centre of sympathy appears to have been esthetically shifted from the lover or fancyman to the husband or cuckold. This displacement is also rendered more stable by the gradual growth of a collective practical realism due to changed economic conditions in the mass of the people who are called to hear and feel a work of art relating to their lives.<sup>15</sup>

In some ways akin to Pound, Joyce demanded a 'factual' realism that militated against romanticism and subjectivism - but a realism that also eliminated the romanticism and egotism of art.<sup>16</sup> What Joyce hints at here is the realisation of a modern aesthetic which would not merely be what Pound configured as 'Flaubert's influence, extended', but a 'practical realism' which was closely tied to changing historical circumstances - and one in particular which could attempt the analysis of the modern social self as it functioned within the conventions and institutions of sexual and emotional relationships.

As Richard Brown points out, the author of the notes to *Exiles* seems 'closer in spirit' to the theory of political *engagement* as developed by Sartre or the realist treatment of social circumstances espoused by Georg Lukács than an ironic and 'disgusted' Flaubert or an impersonal stylist.<sup>17</sup> This shifting of the established 'centre of sympathy' from lover to cuckold in literature would become analogous to the 'shifts' in realism and the interrogation and explosion of its conventions that Joyce would perpetrate in *Ulysses* generally. The work would become a semi-autobiography that also existed as 'a kind of encyclopaedia' written from 'eighteen different points of view and in as many styles' - the stylisation being such that each episode would leave the terrain it had treated 'a burnt up field' behind it.<sup>18</sup> *Ulysses* would also be a stringently naturalistic novel whose character's movements were measured 'with a ruler, compass and stop-watch', while the author ensured that the wanderings of the

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15. *Poems and Exiles*, edited by J. C. C. Mays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 344. For a discussion of Joyce's reference to 'the lost pages of *Madame Bovary*' see Michael Mason, 'Why is Leopold Bloom a Cuckold?' in *English Literary History*, 44 (1977), pp. 171-88. Mason suggests that this reference is merely 'an idiosyncratic' allusion to the publication of *Madame Bovary* in novel form, *sans* the deletions that its initial serialisation demanded, which acts to signal the fact that 'Joyce wanted to be faithful to a truth about European family life' (p. 174 and p. 187).

16. Joyce stated that 'In realism you are down to facts on which the world is based: that sudden reality which smashes romanticism into a pulp... Nature is quite unromantic. It is we who put romance into her, which is a false attitude, an egotism, absurd like all egotism. In *Ulysses* I tried to keep close to fact' (from Arthur Power, *Conversations With James Joyce*, edited by Clive Hart [London: Millington, 1974], p. 98).

17. Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 145.

18. These quotations are taken from Joyce's letters in *Selected Letters*, p. 271 and p. 284, and from a letter cited in Colin MacCabe's editorial preface to *James Joyce: New Perspectives* (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), pp. viii-xv, p. xiii.

modern Odysseus described 'a huge question mark' on the map of Dublin.<sup>19</sup> While opening itself to the contingencies of the everyday it would simultaneously make the reader 'intensely aware of it as a created object' - a modern epic artefact which treats the details of sexual fantasy as minutely as it reproduces Dublin naturalistically, to the extent 'that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed' from its pages.<sup>20</sup>

It is this strange intrusion of an experimental meta-realism into Joyce's Flaubertian 'exact presentation' that Pound will not countenance in *Ulysses*. Pound would insist variously that the novel 'painted a dying world, whereof some parts are eternal' and that it was truly 'the tomb and muniment of a rotten era portrayed with the pen of a master' while for all its ambiguity and artistry, in the final analysis,

*Ulysses* is a summary of pre-war Europe, the blackness and mess and muddle of a "civilization" led by disguised forces and a bought press, the general sloppiness, the plight of the individual intelligence in that mess! Bloom very much *is* the mess.<sup>21</sup>

No doubt Pound regarded the 'citizen' Bloom to be both a parody of the myriad-minded Odysseus - an agglomeration of anti-heroic traits - and a culmination of the liberal-humanist 'MESS' which the nineteenth-century had fostered and from which modernity was disengaging itself.<sup>22</sup> Joyce's production of the 'mess' that is Bloom, however, can be related directly to his sense of the need for 'a collective practical realism' which might respond to and treat 'the mass of the people' as subjects of art. His characteristically complex approach to this need, however, would constitute an attempt to dissolve the boundaries between art and life not according to a Poundian agenda but in relation to the exigencies of a re-focused 'realism' which refused, at a different level to Pound, to distinguish between the two categories.

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19. Frank Delaney, *James Joyce's Odyssey: A Guide to the Dublin of 'Ulysses'* (London, Sydney and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), p. 51.

20. The first quotation is from Robert M. Adams' description of Joyce's shifts between artifice and realism in *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 251, the second is Joyce as cited in Frank Budgen's *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses' and Other Writings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 69. Characteristically, the criteria of realism continues to be subverted by Joyce because, as Adams shows, many of the 'facts' contained in *Ulysses* are spurious (see Adams, *ibid*, pp. 18-26).

21. Quotations are taken from *Pound/Joyce*, p. 268, 'James Joyce: To His Memory', *ibid*, pp. 269-73, p. 272, and 'Past History', p. 251.

22. In *Guide To Kulchur* Pound writes '18th century in the main, cliché. 19th mainly MESS' (p. 183). Bloom symbolises all that Pound wished to eliminate from his vision of the modern (and all that Eliot, too, would malign), for he was, in Suzette A. Henke's words, 'an epic hero who is also a pacifist, a Jew, a *petit bourgeois* businessman, a commercial traveller, a voyeur, an exhibitionist, and an ostensibly inadequate husband... He emerges as a "new womanly man" and unconventional hero who seems, paradoxically, to inhabit those marginal spaces on the edge of social discourse usually reserved for women and for social deviants' (*James Joyce and The Politics of Desire* [New York and London: Routledge, 1990], p. 106).



## Joyce's Bloom: The Mess and the Mass

It is now accepted that *Ulysses* can be read as an interrogation of the historical conventions of literature which concurrently de-familiarises (usually through comedy, exaggeration and parody) the discursive norms and ideals which underpin more general ideologies and systems of practice. Its operations have been seen to produce a 'relativity of all styles', the implications of which have often played a formative role in the development of contemporary theory's stylistic analyses of discourse and cultural authority.<sup>23</sup>

More specifically, it has been shown that the play of language and reference in *Ulysses* acts to undermine established notions of character and identity, or demonstrate through the disjunctive representation of 'internal monologues' and themes of discontinuity raised by the broader narrative framework that character must be considered as an 'effect' of language and discourse.<sup>24</sup> One discourse that is pivotal to the renegotiated models of character that *Ulysses* expressly delivers, however, is formed by its attempts to re-evaluate a 'realist' position *vis-a-vis* the discourses and languages of sexuality and the eroticised subject. Whether it is in the context of Stephen's artistic creativity (in *A Portrait* each poem or work that Stephen contemplates is initiated by an erotic encounter or fantasy) or in the apparently more prosaic transcriptions of the musings of Bloom, the treatment of sexuality is inseparable from systems of language and meaning - or more specifically, in Bloom's case, with popular pornography and erotica:

Mr Bloom turned over idly pages of *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, then of Aristotle's *Masterpiece*...

He laid both books aside and glanced at the third: *Tales of the Ghetto* by Leopold von Sacher Masoch...

... *Fair Tyrants* by James Lovebitch...

He read the other title: *Sweets of Sin*. More in her line. Let us see...

Mr Bloom read again: *The beautiful woman*...

Warmth showered gently over him, cowing his flesh. Flesh yielded amply amid rumpled clothes: whites of eyes swooning up. His nostrils arched themselves for prey. Melting breast ointments

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23. I take the quoted phrase from Patrick Parrinder's discussion of this effect of *Ulysses* in *James Joyce* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 168. Stephen Heath writes of *Ulysses* that its stylistic apparatus describes 'the definitive end of the realist novel' and that after it 'it will no longer be possible to write "innocently", but only to repeat in the assumption of a precise ideological position' ('Ambiviolences: Notes For Reading Joyce' in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, edited by Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984], pp. 31-68, p. 50). For an overview of the impact of Joyce studies on contemporary literary theory see Alan Roughley's *James Joyce and Critical Theory: An Introduction* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

24. Derek Attridge has recently argued, for instance, that the undermining of character in *Ulysses* can be seen to be undertaken through the attack upon the proper name as a 'sign' of discreet identity, and adduces the many transformations of Bloom's identity and misprisions of his name as evidence of this; see Attridge, 'Joyce and the Ideology of Character' in *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, edited by Bernard Benstock (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 152-7, p. 155. An earlier study which comes to similar conclusions about the nature of character in *Ulysses* is James H. Maddox Jr's *Joyce's 'Ulysses' and the Assault Upon Character* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978).



(for him/ for Raoul!). Armpits' oniony sweat. Fishgluey slime (her heaving *embonpoint*). Feel! Press! Chrished! Sulphur dung of lions!<sup>25</sup>

As with most passages from *Ulysses*, Bloom's reading of the material on the book-cart is a nexus where many of the novel's themes and concerns meet and interact. The sadomasochistic undercurrent signalled by the book-titles, for instance, will be 'externalised' and dramatised in the language of 'Circe' as it 're-presents' those possibilities that are 'other' to and excluded from the discourses of 'normal' sexuality and identity.<sup>26</sup> In 'Circe' Bloom will undergo a change of sex, humiliation and penetration at the hands of the whore master/mistress Bella or 'Bello' Cohen (15: 2809-3213) that fuses the themes of language, fantasy and eroticism in an a 'pathopoeia' of dreams and sexual fantasies. In this sense, *Ulysses* 'materialises' and makes 'absurdly concrete' its own metaphors and 'figures' of desire, allowing desire to 'produce' the real in a way that makes Pound's 'psychosis' of signification pale and academic by comparison.<sup>27</sup> What *Ulysses* also manages to present is the *text itself* as the locus of a fluid and 'aesthetic' indeterminacy that defies any clearly grounded analysis of its content. This indeterminacy can be clarified by asking of any analytic approach to the 'pathopoeia' of 'Circe' - who or what is being analysed? Is it Bloom? Is it Joyce, or is it the novel's 'voices' as a whole? The *manifest* workings of desire, subjectivity and language in the pages of *Ulysses* make art and 'life' metamorphic and 'interactive' in a much more thorough way than Pound's dares, and at a level that Pound can barely comprehend.

While Bloom's sexuality and even his gender is unstable and transferable in the broader scheme of *Ulysses* the network of references that accompany the theme of sexuality are always tied to an overall concern with an interplay between languages and texts, the senses, sensuality and inter-personal feeling. The part of the passage from 'Wandering Rocks' above which follows '*The beautiful woman...*' consciously plays with the uncertain position of character, text and reader: are we 'reading' Bloom reading (does 'warmth showered over him' comprise a quotation from *Sweets of Sin*?) or are we privy

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25. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, the corrected text edited by Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), episode 10, lines 585-6, 591-2, 601, 606 and 618-23; future references to *Ulysses* will be indicated by episode and line number in the main body of the text, and the now established Homeric chapter titles will be used.

26. But therefore constitutive of them - a fact that the 'relativity of styles' in *Ulysses* constantly asserts as it allows the 'other' of its discourses to invade its own narratives (this is especially the case in the constant expansion through metaphor and pun of the political rhetoric in 'Cyclops' for instance), or in the thematisation of 'exclusion' such as evoked by Stephen's thinking upon history in 'Nestor' - the narrative of history proceeding by events 'lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted' (2: 50-1).

27. I take the term 'pathopoeia' from Karen Lawrence's treatment of the language of this episode as the fantastic actualisation of 'Metaphoric substitution, synecdoche, hyperbole' in *The Odyssey of Style in 'Ulysses'* (Princeton New Jersey and Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 159 and p. 151, and the idea of 'Circe's 'absurd' concretisation of the novel's figures from Daniel Ferrer's similar treatment of the chapter in 'Circe, Regret and Regression', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, pp. 127-44, p. 141.



to the emotions aroused in Bloom? The question is intrinsically ambiguous, for what is occurring here is the emergence of erotic desire (Bloom's or the 'fictive' character's) through the productive interplay of differences and coincidences between Bloom and the language of the (fictive) novel. The distinction between the character 'Bloom' and the text breaks down at the point where sexual desire emerges, *Ulysses* suggests, because it is precisely in the 'aesthetics' of sexuality and sexual feeling that the difference between life and art - the same difference that Pound is so eager to close - becomes inherently indeterminate. It is in this creative and mundane difference and interplay between fact and fiction - perhaps the central theme of *Ulysses* - that Joyce's own delineation of an aesthetics of human senses, desires and feelings is developed.

Through his appearance in a text which is 'about' the nature of human interaction with discourse and language, the distinction between Bloom's emotions and the erotic text he is reading in 'Wandering Rocks' is broken down, and a nexus of interplay between art and the textual 'life' of the Blooms established. The marital relationship between Leopold and Molly, for instance, is signalled by the reference to 'Flesh yielded amply amid rumpled clothes' (an allusion to Molly's 'ample bedwarmed flesh'; see 4: 238-9 and 17: 2032-3) and the fact that he buys the book for 'her' traces a connection between the inter-sensibility of couples which directly invokes the archetypal pairing of Odysseus and Penelope announced by the *leitmotif* of 'Metempsychosis... It's Greek... That means the transmigration of souls' (4: 341-2) that is itself drawn from a popular novel Molly is reading. The virile image of 'Sulphur dung of lions!' that Bloom's reading provokes will recur in 'Circe' (the 'odour' of the prostitute Zoe tempts Bloom as well as '*the rustle of her slip in whose sinuous folds lurks the lion reek of all the male brutes that have possessed her*', 15: 2016-7) while this in turn will signal the 'equanimity', acceptance and even companionship that the cuckolded Bloom experiences in being the last term of a series in his wife's bed, wherein 'he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity' (17:2177 and 17: 2130-31).

The dung of lions' traced through the '*lion reek of all the male brutes that have possessed her*' also brings to the fore another aspect of Bloom's psychic and emotional life that shows the thoroughness of Joyce's 'practical realism' and the sort of 'displacements' of 'centres of sympathy' which his writing is pursuing. The virile male, as symbolised by the lion, appears in Molly's monologue in 'Penelope' in her remembrance of the afternoon spent cuckolding Bloom with Blazes Boylan ('sure you might as well be in bed with what with a lion God Im sure hed have something better to say for himself an old Lion

would', 18: 1376-8). Bloom is aware of, and disturbed by the appointment his wife has with Boylan, and the 'dung of lions' evoked at the book-cart also signals *pain* for Bloom - he is 'mastering his troubled breath' (10: 638) for more than one reason as he buys the book for Molly. Subtly, and only through a reading that traverses the book searching for relevant hints and elisions, the narrative of *Ulysses* begins to show that Bloom is *avoiding* thinking about Boylan's impending visit. Lapses and repressions in Bloom's memory are equivalent to lapses and omissions in the narrative (in Calypso' [4: 485] he forgets where he put his hat, for instance - and the action is not narrated - because on entering the house he spots a letter to Molly from Boylan which is both the reason for his preoccupation and the narrative elision), and it is not until the 'other' of Bloom's sexual feelings erupts in 'Circe' that these emotional repressions and elisions are clarified as Bloom voyeuristically participates in his own cuckolding:

BOYLAN

*(to Bloom, over his shoulder)* You can apply your eye to the keyhole and play with yourself while I just go through her a few times.

BLOOM

Thank you, sir. I will sir. May I bring two men chums to witness the deed and take a snapshot?  
... Vaseline, sir...?

... *(his eyes wildly dilated, clasps himself)* Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!  
(15: 3786-3816)

Aesthetics do not refer merely to the 'erotic' but include the aesthetics of pain, sentiment, humiliation, pathos and repression for Joyce (although anonymous narrative interventions keep suggesting to the reader - in 'Sirens' especially ['Yes. Mr Bloom crossed bridge of Yessex', 11: 229] - Bloom's emotional discomfort). His equanimity at entering his wife's bed as one 'in a series' is not an uncomplicated acceptance of 'Penelope's' suitor, but one terminus of an emotional odyssey that *Ulysses* has taken pains to chart - the aesthetics of feeling and the aesthetics of writing mirroring closely the interplay between body, mind, and their representation. The idea of items in a series is extended into Stephen's visit to the book-cart a few pages later. He reads 'Thumbed pages', wondering 'Who has passed here before me?' when his eye is caught by the rubric 'How to win a woman's love' (10: 845-7) and his suffering sister appears, causing him to hide the book he is reading. She is buying a French primer - a language and country he already knows - and it is the 'language' of this purchase which signals an attack of remorse on his part: 'She is drowning. Agenbite. Save her' (10: 875). In the later chapters, while in the role of surrogate father to Stephen, Bloom will hide a 'salacious' book - *The Sweets of Sin* - from Stephen while apparently tempting him with a flattering picture of Molly (16:



1421-36) and urging him to accompany him home - attempting to establish a relationship and overlap between conjugal, paternal and fraternal feeling, compassion and sexual desire which the aesthetics of *Ulysses* insist upon.<sup>28</sup>

If the sexuality of the characters in *Ulysses* can be said to have a focus, then the erotic word, image or 'book of inferior literary style' (17: 733-4) perhaps provides it. R. B. Kershner is right when he states, with reference to authors like H. G. Wells, Gissing and Flaubert, that 'by the turn of the century... popular literature had become a subject of serious literature',<sup>29</sup> but Joyce was to 'seriously' embed popular literature in the basic movements of subjectivity and sexuality through a 'realism' which not only refused to exclude mass culture from its model of the modern aesthetic, but also refused to defer to an 'authoritative' conception of art and the aesthetic that was distinct from the 'mass' (or 'mess') of modern life.

If Joyce's 'aesthetics' of sense and feeling ('Feel!') are often transacted through the media of fiction, popular genres and pornography, then another aspect of Joyce's 'mass' realism resides in the ephemeral and 'artificial' discourse of fashion and clothing. Whereas the surfaces and artifices that 'confuse' the senses are symptoms of the decadence of the human condition in Eliot's poetics, that which attires or adorns the body exists in *Ulysses* as a sign of the indefinite limits of the senses and the aesthetics of their languages. Indeed, the erotic can hardly occur in *Ulysses* without a reference to clothing and its seductive articulation of the body and its desires, as the examples already cited show: 'She had that cream gown on with the rip she never stitched', 'Flesh yielded amply amid rumpled clothes', '*the rustle of her slip in whose sinuous folds...*', '*wondrous gowns and costliest frillies. For him! For Raoul!*'. In total contrast to the definition of art which relies upon an elimination of the 'artifice' of human intervention in culture, as in the metaphysics of Eliot, Joyce's aesthetic perpetually promotes a paradigm of the subject as an effective *artifex* - a changing surface of 'manufactured' meanings and sensual interactions. As the emphasis in *Ulysses* upon character, feeling and sexuality as an effect of the interplay and interweaving of self and fantasy, life and art, fact and fiction has shown, the 'fabric' of clothing constitutes a language (a textual 'textile') through which the creative interplay of difference and non-difference, absence and presence, revelation and veiling, create meaning within an aesthetics

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28. Bloom thinks of his dead son Rudy, for instance, in the erotic context of his conception: 'Must have been that morning in Raymond terrace she was at the window watching the two dogs at it by the wall... She had that cream gown on with the rip she never stitched. Give us a touch, Poldy. God, I'm dying for it. How life begins'. (6: 77-82)

29. R. B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina press, 1989), p. 11.



of physicalised cultural interaction. Joyce drives home the metaphoric union of text and clothing by allowing Stephen to paraphrase Pater: 'As we... weave and unweave our bodies... from day to day... so does the artist weave and unweave his image'.<sup>30</sup>

Gerty MacDowell, for example - a character nurtured by the clichés of popular romance in the narrative of 'Nausicaa' - meets Bloom inside a fantasy or 'fiction' which allows him to masturbate while she reveals her underwear ('*Lingerie* does it. Felt for the curves inside her *deshabille*', 13: 796) and re-experience some of his earlier erotic musings and readings: 'O sweetie all your little girlwhite up I saw dirty bracegirdle made me do love sticky... met him pike hoses frillies for Raoul...' (13: 1279-82). Their meeting place is what both Bloom and the fashion-obsessed Gerty recognise as a 'language' - 'Did me good all the same' Bloom remarks, 'Still it was a kind of language between us' (13: 939 and 944) - but it is the language or 'art' of clothing which mediates this sexual encounter.<sup>31</sup> The actual 'character' of Gerty is too obscured by 'clothing' to be known, for the narration remains, in an echoing of the Flaubertian spirit, idiomatically true to her romantic nature ('Had kind fate but willed her to be born a gentlewoman of high degree...', 13: 99). That this constitutes a self-limitation is suggested by the fact of her lameness - which she represses and of which Bloom remarks when she limps away 'Glad I didn't know it when she was on show' (13: 775-6). By thus interweaving and presenting the 'paralysis' of Gerty in the discourse of romantic fiction and feminine stereotypes, and contrasting the actuality of her lameness with the 'fictional' space in which she and Bloom have just communed, Joyce confronts the inauthenticity of discourse at the same time that he advertises the complex nature of the aesthetic that he is trying to define. The cultural specificity of the languages that modernity uses (popular fiction, clothes, fashion, the 'modern art of advertisement' [17: 581] and their relation to desire) are not merely critiqued or dismissed through a practice of 'Flaubert's influence extended', but staged and examined, and the dissolution of character, identity and personality within these complex but 'mass' discourses to a great extent celebrated.<sup>32</sup>

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30. *Ulysses* 9: 376-8, and Pater's conclusion to *The Renaissance* pp. 59-60. Vicki Mahaffey has shown that 'Sexuality depends upon the interplay of fact and fiction; the interplay is constant... the identification of which is which can never finally be fixed' (*Reauthorizing Joyce* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988], p. 159). My discussion is indebted to the relationship that she charts between the languages of *Ulysses*, its 'language' of clothing and the metaphors of writing and weaving that her study explores (see especially pp. 156-61).

31. Mahaffey suggests that the female characters in *Ulysses* such as Molly and Gerty prefer clothing - 'the language of flesh' - to Stephen and Bloom's meditations upon language as 'the clothing of thought' (*Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 141). Molly's monologue in 'Penelope' supports the points made so far in its constant references to clothing in the context of social and sexual encounters and the observation that 'sure you cant get on in this world without style' (18: 467).

32. Joyce would rehearse the interplay between fact and fiction through the theme of female clothing and character again in *Finnegans Wake*: 'Who in his heart doubts either that the facts of feminine clothiering are there all the time or that the feminine fiction, stranger than the facts, is there also at the same time, only a little to the rere? Or that one may be



'Nausicaa' also functions on another level however. While there is a focus upon the 'artifice' of the modern languages of sexuality in the episode, the relative integrity of these languages is suggested by an intertextual critique that issues back from 'Nausicaa' towards the 'epiphanic' revelation of sexuality that Stephen experiences through the contemplation of the 'bird-girl' on the beach in *A Portrait*:

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down... Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face...

- Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.

He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling...

... To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! (pp. 171-2)

The similarity between this passage and the 'romantic' narrative of 'Nausicaa' has been remarked.<sup>33</sup> What is seldom considered however is the distance that Joyce is placing between the failure 'to recreate life out of life!' that Stephen the artist of *Ulysses* embodies (as Vincent says to Stephen, 'All desire to see you bring forth the work you meditate, to acclaim you Stephaneferos' [14: 1120-21]), but as Mulligan has already noted 'They drove his wits astray... by visions of hell... That is his tragedy. He can never be a poet' [10: 1072-4]) and the mundane but telling 'recreation' of life out of the aesthetics of masturbation that *Ulysses* accomplishes. If critique resides in 'Nausicaa' it is not only as a critique of the 'paralysis' of Gerty but as a confrontation with the delimited sexual and emotional aesthetics of Stephen. This critique, by extension, becomes a thematisation and interrogation of the self (Joyce/Stephen) as author which not only undercuts the possibility of a Flaubertian artistic 'remove' in Joyce's fiction, but drains art of the kind of 'impersonal' authority that Eliot, and Pound with his 'castigation of the word', were at pains to promote.

If Joyce can be seen to 'celebrate' the languages, the aesthetics and the mundane 'metamorphoses' of the mass at the expense of the authority of the artist, then a high point of such a parodic celebration occurs in 'Circe'. In the 'pathopoeia' of this episode changes in clothes are *equivalent to* and constitute

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separated from the other? Or that both may be contemplated simultaneously?' (*Finnegans Wake* [London: Faber and Faber, 1975], p. 109). It must be recognised that Joyce walks a thin line between the realistic presentation of the 'languages' of sexuality and what Pound would consider to be a Flaubertian excoriation of the paralysed 'mass' mind in 'Nausicaa'. Lawrence, for instance sees Gerty as 'a kind of poor man's Emma Bovary' and a 'parody' of femininity (*The Odyssey of Style*, pp. 121-2); other critics, however, consider 'Nausicaa' to constitute a 'defamiliarisation' of female socialisation and not an 'attack' on the limitations of the character of Gerty (Bonnie Kime Scott makes this point in *James Joyce* [Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987], p. 63).

33. By Richard Ellmann, for instance, in *James Joyce* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 359 and p. 374.



changes in character. Bloom has already undergone many such transformations when he states to Zoe that he seldom smokes; her response ('Go on. Make a stump speech out of it', 15: 1353) - signals Bloom's metamorphosis from a labourer (*in workman's corduroy overalls, black gansy with red floating tie and apache cap*, 15: 1355-6) into Lord Mayor of Dublin and progressive reformer, the festivities of which turn into a coronation ceremony (*in dalmatic and purple mantle... with dignity*, 15: 1477-8), then a hailing of him as the new messiah of 'the new Bloomusalem' (15: 1544). The celebration turns precisely at the point where utopian 'schemes for social regeneration' and the complementary statues of 'the new nine [actually 12] muses' are wheeled onto the scene, and Bloom's abasements begin again:

BLOOM

Mixed races and mixed marriage.

LENEHAN

What about mixed bathing?

*(Bloom explains to those near him his schemes for social regeneration. All agree with him. The keeper of the Kildare street museum appears, dragging a lorry on which are the shaking statues of several naked goddesses, Venus Callipyge, Venus Pandemos, Venus Metempsychosis, and plaster figures, also naked, representing Manufacture, Liberty of Speech, Plural Voting, Gastronomy, Private Hygiene, Seaside Concert Entertainments, Painless Obstetrics and Astronomy for the People)*

FATHER FARLEY

He is an episcopalian, an agnostic, an anythingarian seeking to overthrow our holy faith.

MRS RIORDAN

(tears up her will) I'm disappointed in you! You bad man!

(15: 1699-1715)

The subtext of this passage might be a direct parody of the political utopianism and artistic classicism of Pound (Bloom's plaster statues of 'renegotiated' aspects of a deity of Pound's pantheon echo the scorned moulds 'in plaster' that the 'age demanded' in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*). More directly, however, the passage suggests a symbolic failure on the 'messianic' Bloom's part to adhere to the close relationship between an aesthetics of the body and an aesthetics of art that *Ulysses* has instituted, for in the novel, the tendency has been to collapse the statue - the symbol of 'classical' (or, in Nietzschean terms 'Apollinian') representation - *back into* the specific domain of the sensual body. Bloom will wonder, for instance, whether the statues of goddesses have anuses -

The lovely forms of women sculpted Junonian. Immortal lovely. And we stuffing food in one hole and out behind: food, chyle, blood, dung, earth, food... They have no. Never looked. I'll look today. Keeper won't see. Bend down let something drop. See if she. (8: 928-32)



- and his earliest meeting with Stephen will be on his way into the National museum in order to inspect them (9: 585). In 'Penelope' Molly's fantasy will transform the statue of Narcissus into flesh -

like that lovely little statue he bought I could look at him all day long curly head and his shoulders... I often felt I wanted to kiss him all over also his lovely young cock there so simple I wouldn't mind taking it in my mouth if nobody was looking...<sup>34</sup>

The mobility between the functioning and desiring body and the artwork in the aesthetic of *Ulysses* is also latent in the earlier erotic passage taken from 'Wandering Rocks', for the interplay between Bloom and his reading the lines 'His nostrils arched themselves for prey... Armpits' oniony sweat. Fishgluey slime (*her heaving embonpoint*). Feel! Press!' echo many similar passages in 'Lestrygonians', an episode whose 'Organ' is the esophagus and whose 'Technique' is peristaltic, consolidating an accord between sexual desire and the 'aesthetics' of the processing body. Even the presentations of the early love affair between Molly and Bloom are presented through images of their bodies associated sexually and digestively - as in the instance of the mutually chewed, passed and swallowed seedcake on the hill at Ben Howth: 'Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweetsour of her spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy' (8: 907-8).

It is the gravitation of Joyce's aesthetic around the feeling and functioning body and the languages of contemporary culture rather than the symbolic phallus and the archetypes of art that Pound would criticise when he received the 'Sirens' episode of *Ulysses* - an episode whose 'Art' is music and whose language consistently prioritises the sensuality of sound over sense, closing with the 'music' of Bloom's fart. Pound had little time for the modes of signification and significance that Joyce was exploring, and would write of his own

... gallic preference for Phallus - purely personal - know mittel europa humour runs to the other orifice...

Abnormal keenness of insight O.K. But *obsessions* arsecore-ial, cloacal, deist, aesthetic as opposed to arsethetic, any obsession or tic shd. be very carefully considered being turned loose.

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Besides. Bloom has been disproportionately on

???

or hasn't he. Where in hell is Stephen Telemachus?

(Pound/Joyce, p. 158)

In order to explicate Pound's reaction it should be noted that the first three chapters or the 'Telemachiad' of *Ulysses* appear to be, thematically and stylistically, an extrapolation of *A Portrait*.

The next three chapters foreground Bloom and include a graphic trip to the jakes that Pound

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34. *Ulysses*, 18: 1349-53. Sentimental as well as 'classical' art is 'physicalised' by the novel's operations; notice for instance the fate of the dramatised figure from 'The Bath of the Nymph' over the bed. Given away with the Easter number of *Photo Bits* (4: 368-70) as its 'immortality' and aphysicality (15: 3392-5) is subject to Bloom's fondling ('you kissed me in four places', 15: 3264) and finally exploded in 'Circe' (15: 3469-70).

considered to 'overdo the matter' (*Pound/Joyce*, p. 159). Chapter seven, 'Aeolus', is set in the newspaper office, and although the stylistic and typographical disruption of the published text is acute here, many of these features are late additions (as late as 1921 - Pound's letter was written in 1919)<sup>35</sup> and the original 'Aeolus' can be judged to raise the general issues of 'a "civilization" led by disguised forces and a bought press, the general sloppiness, the plight of the individual intelligence' which Pound discerned to be the object of the novel's 'elimination'.<sup>36</sup> After this Stephen and Bloom predominate in another chapter apiece, and then a path that Odysseus did not take ('Wandering Rocks') is embarked upon. By the time of Sirens, however, the narrative has begun to fragment considerably and thematise its own textual structure (the 'overture' to the chapter is a disjunct synopsis of the episode itself). The loss of control that the novel was experiencing in Pound's estimation, and the apparently perverse significances and correspondences that it was establishing within itself, were directly related to a pathological shift of focus from the artistic 'Stephen Telemachus' to the 'arseore-ial' 'mess' that was Bloom.<sup>37</sup>

Pound's suggestion that 'One *can* Fahrt with less pomp & circumstance' shows his reluctance to consider Bloom and the aesthetics of the body as a positive element in the novel's schemas and values. As Read and other critics have suggested, there is much to be gained from a political analysis of the relation between Pound and Joyce in terms of this opposition between the former's preference for the assertion of the 'gallic' phallus over Joyce's 'excremental', Bloomian and 'passively' Jewish or 'feminised' 'arsethetic'.<sup>38</sup> As has been hinted, the opposition between the authority of the phallus that

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35. Michael Groden cites a letter by Joyce written in 1921 which claims that 'You will hardly recognise parts of *Ulysses* I have worked so much on them'; Groden adds that for a reader who had followed the serial publication of the book from 1918-20 'the least recognisable episode in the published book would have been "Aeolus"' (Groden, *'Ulysses' in Progress* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], p. 64).

36. The 'Hell' cantos would take up this theme with their fulminations against 'the betrayers of language / ... the press gang / ... the perverters of language' (*Cantos*, p. 61).

37. Bloom's fart is completed by the word 'Done', a word which, in the book's arcane systems of cross-signification, anticipates the later scene of Bloom's masturbation and thoughts of Molly's infidelity in 'Nausicaa' ('O, he did. Into her. She did. Done.', 13: 849), but Pound might have perceived that it also obscurely parodied the earlier motif 'Do and do. Thing done. In a roseroy of Fetter Lane...' (9: 651) from 'Scylla and Charybdis' by which Stephen sets the scene for a theory of Shakespearean creativity. The play of signification in Joyce's 'arsethetic' which Pound objected so strongly to in the 'Sirens' episode for similar reasons is also proleptic of his definition of Joyce's later writing as drunkenness and excretion ('diarrhoea of consciousness', *Pound/Joyce*, pp. 256-7). Wyndham Lewis feared, like Pound, that in modern writing 'without the control of the intellect, words have tended to go over into music', resulting in 'the alienation of *the word* from its meaning' (*The Art of being Ruled* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1926], p. 392 and p. 396). Pound would later speak of the burgeoning critical 'Joyce industry' as 'Joyce inflation', although this label would be an equally accurate description of what his own economies of language considered the polysemic *Wake* itself to be stimulating.

38. Bloom's 'mittel' European status as a Jew renders him 'culturally fluid' in his 'unabsorbed' otherness for Pound (I take these phrases from Makin's discussion of anti-semitism in *Pound's Cantos*, pp. 119-20). Read elaborates upon Pound's opposition between the 'phallic' and the 'excremental' in *Pound/Joyce*, p. 146. Richard Ellmann offers Otto Weininger's anti-semitic work *Sex and Character* as a source whose values Joyce inverted by presenting Bloom 'positively' as the carrier of Jewish 'feminine' and 'passive' characteristics (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 463), and Casillo gives the same anti-



Pound upholds and the 'mess' of Joyce's 'arsethetic' that he fulminates against might also be read in terms of an opposition between 'classical' art and the 'grotesque' and 'carnavalesque' forms of popular representation as they arise in Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais. Ironically, Pound was one of the first to accredit *Ulysses* with Rabelaisian features when he said of both Joyce's novel and *Gargantua* that they 'boil over the general form accepted as the form of the novel',<sup>39</sup> but the notion of the 'grotesque' body and the carnival of populist insubordination such as Bakhtin defines them would have described only the aberrations and excesses that Pound perceived in *Ulysses*.

As Bakhtin sets out his terms, there is little distinction - as little as there is in Joyce - between a theory of art and an aesthetics of the body. The 'classical' body he defines as that which 'presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual... All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual... the impenetrable façade'. The grotesque body, however, is that which 'is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed... the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome... The artistic logic of the grotesque... retains only its excrescences... and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths'. This grotesque celebration of the always 'unfinished' and 'open' body finds realisation in the politics of the popular festivity of carnival, whose historical role, Bakhtin suggests, 'marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true... feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalised and completed'.<sup>40</sup>

The parallels between Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais and the 'arsethetic' of *Ulysses* are marked. It is the body 'open' to engagement with other bodies that Bloom and Molly seek to discover in the statues and works of art that they contemplate, as it is the indeterminate boundary of the body, its adornment and its possibilities of physical excitation and interaction that demarcates the aesthetic domain of

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semitic source as a political influence on Pound; see *The Genealogy of Demons*, p. 362, note 13. One of the clearest psychoanalytic readings of the opposition between Joycean and Poundian aesthetics conducted in terms of a 'phallic' economy and an 'excremental' aesthetics of excess is made by Paul Smith in chapter 5 of *Pound Revised*.

39. 'Past History', p. 250. Pound would also point up the 'tirade à la Rabelais' that the styles of *Ulysses* often performed, say that both writers were 'a rock against the follies of [their] age' ('Ulysses', p. 405), and would judge the 'Cyclops' episode of *Ulysses* to contain a 'Parody of styles, a trick borrowed from Rabelais' (*Pound/Joyce*, p. 161).

40. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 320, pp. 317-8 and p. 10. Other critics have pointed out the relevance of Bakhtin's notions of carnival and the grotesque to Joyce's writing; see for instance Parrinder's *James Joyce*, p. 9, and Henke's *Politics of Desire*, pp. 113-4. There is a close relationship, but one that has not gained any critical attention, between Bakhtinian aesthetics of the body and Nietzsche's polarity of the Dionysian and Apollinian impulses in art - aspects of which connote respectively music and the urge away from individuation, and the plastic arts and the *principium individuationis* (see for instance *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 99-100).



*Ulysses* generally. Here a distinction between the movements and function of desire in Joyce's language, and Pound's 'fluid forces' which metamorphically stratify and 'figure' the environment, can be made, for while Poundian desire supposes an 'ecstasy' and 'resistance' which brings gods into being, the 'Language of love' for Joyce is that which disperses and exceeds language, meaning and the senses:

Bloom. Flood of warm jamjam lickitup secretness flowed to flow in music out, in desire, dark to lick flow invading. Tipping her tepping her tapping her topping her. Tup. Pores to dilate dilating. Tup. The joy the feel the warm the. Tup. To pour o'er sluices pouring gushes. Flood, gush, flow, joygush, tupthrob. Now! Language of love. (11: 705-9)

The 'excessive' and 'carnavalesque' aspects of 'Circe' need no commentary (indeed, one of the acts that 'messiah' Bloom performs within it is to declare a 'weekly carnival with masked licence', 15: 1690), but if aspects of the politics of Joyce's 'arsethetic' are to be contrasted to the symbolic authority of the Poundian phallus,<sup>41</sup> then it could be argued that the final political form that the aesthetic of *Ulysses* takes is neither the endless subversion of authority that Rabelaisian carnival suggests, nor its aesthetic realisation as in Pound, but a modern exploration of the mediaeval metaphor of the Body Politic - with an emphasis upon the first term.<sup>42</sup> The relation between the (individual) body and the social discourses with which it interacts and in which it can be dispersed can be seen as a conscious elaboration of an ethical scheme in *Ulysses*. The term 'ethics' derives from the Greek *ethos*, which, in the singular signifies 'character' and in its plural form ('ethics') signifies 'manners' or customs'. As Steven Connor has pointed out, *Ulysses* can be seen to exist as a meeting place of the two realms of ethics (the singularity of the individual and the generality of the social) which simultaneously frustrates final ethical closure - the book accomplishing this through its aesthetics of incompleteness, relativism and dispersal.<sup>43</sup> In the Joycean 'city' an ethical exploration of Dublin and Dubliners within a *polis* of discourses - contemporary and historical - and sensitised 'bodies' takes place (each episode has its location, most their 'Organ' but each 'self' in *Ulysses* is, like the episodes, only realised in its dispersal between other languages and episodic 'selves'). This ensures that the 'displacements' that the 'practical realism' of *Ulysses* attempts include displacements of the distinctions between the ethical, the political and the aesthetic. But this occurs in a way that undercuts the triumphalism of Poundian aesthetics by

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41. Pound would insist upon a distinction between the phallus and the 'piss-tube' that was the biological penis - 'the COCK ERECT/= object of worship' (from a letter cited by Smith in *Pound Revised*, p. 55).

42. 'Among other things', Joyce insisted, 'My book is the epic of the human body', while saying of his characters that 'If they had no body they would have no mind' (cited in Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, p. 21).

43. See Steven Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value* (Oxford and Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell, 1992). Connor suggests that Bloom's character is constantly dissolved, fractured and contaminated by its interactions with the 'other', but that it is able to return to itself 'preserved and enlarged' (p. 207); ultimately however, *Ulysses* acts to frustrate ethical and aesthetic narratives or 'economies' of investment and return. For Connor's definition of ethics see pp. 199-200; for his discussion of *Ulysses* see pp. 203-220.



collapsing them into metamorphic processes which are much less spectacular, but much more fundamental, than Pound's own.

The constant interplay between singularity and plurality, fiction and reality that Joyce presents weaves a 'fabric' of languages that the sensual body exists in, a fabric of the Body Politic that is in turn as variegated and 'impure' as Dublin and Irish history itself - comprised as it is of what Joyce called in 1907 'fabrics' of 'blood and the human word'.<sup>44</sup> It is in the ultimate impurity of *Ulysses* and its languages that Joyce's political aesthetic inheres, 'politicizing art', in Walter Benjamin's words, and 'aestheticising' politics in its refusal to draw a distinction between modern art and the ethical life of the modern mass and city - erasing art's 'point of origin' as an event distinct from the everyday and given. The scope of Joyce's political concerns can be followed in *Ulysses* through the arc that links the parodied Mass and critiqued authority of 'The imperial British state... and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church' in Telemachus (1: 643-4), to the tentative affirmation that joins Stephen and Bloom in the secular ritual of the 'massproduct' in the penultimate episode: 'they drank in jocoserious silence Epps's massproduct, the creature cocoa' (17: 369-70). As art, ritual and affirmation penetrate life to a different order of magnitude and at different levels of 'non-difference' to those desired by Pound, Bloom is rightly described as 'a bit of an artist in his spare time' (16: 1448-9) and as having 'a touch of the artist' (10: 582) about him. This Pound could not recognise - a fact echoed by the narrow constraints put upon the aesthetic by Pound when he wrote of Bloom's trip to the jakes in 'Calypso' that 'I think certain things simply bad writing, in this section... this is bad art, just as any needless superlative is bad art' (*Pound/Joyce*, p. 131), the riposte to which probably issued from Bloom in 'Circe': 'University of life. Bad art' (15: 840).

### *Ulysses* and *A Portrait*: The Reverse Reading of Authority

In one of its aspects, then, *Ulysses* tirelessly undercuts the idea that anything can halt the play of potential relationships between and within the systems of 'life' and 'art'. Like Pound, Joyce presents the reader with a contemporaneity and history comprised of a fabric of languages and texts. There is no

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44. Joyce writes that 'Our civilization is a vast fabric, in which the most diverse elements are mingled... it is useless to look for a thread that may have remained pure and virgin without having undergone the influence of a neighbouring thread. What race or what language... can boast of being pure today? And no race has less right to utter such a boast than the race now living in Ireland. Nationality (if it really is not a convenient fiction like so many others...) must find its reason for being rooted in something that surpasses and transcends and informs changing things like blood and the human word' ('Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages', in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, edited by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann [New York: The Viking Press, 1959], pp 165-6).



single pattern of 'luminous details' from which significance emerges in *Ulysses*, however, for the interplay of differences and the carrier of a different kind of illumination - Bloom - provide patterns of aesthetic interaction and (ironised) mythic parallel that promote interpretation but problematise evaluation, provide fascination but frustrate endorsement. If, as Pound's attempts to think 'before difference' suggest, difference itself is the site where critique finds a sure purchase, then difference and distanciation are built into *Ulysses*, and multiplied by it, on a number of levels.

While aspiring to be 'the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life)' (*Letters*, p. 271), the novel's actual complexity suggests that any identity it has must be approached in terms of an effect of multiplicity and indeterminacy (like the locus of Bloom, where 'Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet' [15: 2097-8] and whose character can rightfully be accused of leading 'a quadruple existence' [15: 853]). While the title *Ulysses* promotes the idea of a modern work 'brought into deliberate collision with a powerful predecessor', its generic identity and function only come into being through an interplay between past and present, epic and novel.<sup>45</sup> While miming the formal plot of the latter the symbolic overspill of its references both within and outside its covers and its precisely defined historical moment (each titled episode has not only a Dublin time and location but a specifically 'Homeric' identity) constantly invokes the epic *Odyssey* and makes the earlier text 'metaphorically' present to any reader of *Ulysses*.<sup>46</sup>

However, such interplay, if taken as a defining feature of the work and its interpretation, suggests that *Ulysses* functions not only through the trope of metaphor but through an elaborate 'allotropism' - or an ability to exist in at least two or more different forms at one and the same time.<sup>47</sup> The same allotropic rule holds for the Joycean presentation of aesthetic concerns in *Ulysses*, for if the scope of

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45. The quoted phrase is taken from Jennifer Levine's essay 'Ulysses', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, edited by Derek Attridge (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 131-59. She suggests that 'the name "Ulysses" seems entirely Joycean. But that title is a provocation. Imagine for a moment that this seven hundred page novel is called *Hamlet* and you will regain a sense of it as a text brought into a deliberate collision with a powerful predecessor.' (pp. 131-2) Read suggests that both Pound and Joyce had schooled themselves to write the modern epic. As he points out, however, it was Joyce who sought to find a way to conflate and integrate the ancient epic poem and the more recent historical 'epic', the novel, into a modern work (see *Pound/Joyce*, p. 10 and p. 193).

46. Daniel Schwarz writes of the novel's 'metaphoric' title and structure that '... metaphor brings into existence something that is absent simply by declaring its presence... Metaphor is by definition synchronic and knows no temporal boundaries. Joyce's title *Ulysses* announces the metaphoricity of the novel' (Daniel R. Schwarz, *Reading Joyce's 'Ulysses'* [Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987], p. 14).

47. The editor of the recently re-published 1922 edition of *Ulysses* figures it as 'allotropic'; see the introduction to *Ulysses*, edited by Jeri Johnson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. xvii. Earlier Umberto Eco had defined Joyce's writing as 'isotropic' - a writing for which 'in an appropriate system of coordinates, no single coordinate appears privileged to an observer looking in different directions' (*The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos*, translated by Ellen Esrock [London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989], p. 76).



the aesthetic is radically expanded and collapsed into the 'everyday' by the sensual figure of Bloom, then the authority of art and the modern condition of the artist is explored through Stephen.

Joyce's critical focus upon the languages that pervade the modern *polis* is in part focused by his characters' estrangement from them - this being one of the factors which ensure the immanence of critique to Joyce's writing and the extension of the politics of his aesthetic. At the same time that he affirms he also critiques; there is no identification without an equal and often opposite distancing. For the Stephen of *A Portrait* his heretical rejection of 'home, fatherland and church' leaves him with the 'nets' of a language that he can reclaim only through the transcending powers of art (the simultaneously 'violent' and 'luxurious' language by which 'Stephen escaped from the cold silence of intellectual revolt', p. 181). This language belongs to the English Dean of Studies before it belongs to him, and it is 'so familiar and so foreign' he 'cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit' (p. 189). The theme of exclusion (and usurpation) continues into *Ulysses*, and it is Mr Deasy's anti-semitic comment that 'Ireland, they say, has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the jews... And do you know why? ... Because she never let them in' (2: 437-42) that allows Stephen to remember Jews on the steps of a Parisian stock exchange, and reflect 'Not theirs: these clothes, this speech, these gestures... Time will surely scatter all... Their eyes knew their years of wandering and, patient, knew the dishonours of their flesh' (2: 367), anticipating the presence of Bloom as the bearer of a relatedly 'alien' experience of Dublin.

Stephen and Bloom emerge respectively as the symbols of colonialism and an enforced diaspora.<sup>48</sup> Both exist in systems of language and custom which precede them, and, as Hugh Kenner has written of Stephen's interchange with the Dean of Studies in *A Portrait*, this attests that 'All language is acquired speech, imposed and to be accepted... The issue is not national but metaphysical'.<sup>49</sup> The allotropism of Joyce, however, attests that it is both, and that the violence of the dispersal of the colonised or dispossessed self in dominant discourses is always a matter of degree. It is significant, however, that it is Stephen, the 'artist' of *Ulysses*, who is unable to participate in a dialogue or a 'positive' interaction with this historical and political environment; as he says to the reform-minded Bloom in 'Eumaeus',

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48. Bloom is referred to as 'this alien' in 'Oxen of the Sun' (14: 906) and his ambivalent national status, symbolised by his inability to define 'nation' amid the rhetorical 'gigantism' of 'Cyclops' (12: 1422-3), emphasises the privileged role of the outsider in the political scheme of *Ulysses*. The alienation and restriction inherent in language is also echoed in the semiotics of clothes: Stephen's itinerary of borrowings in the face of Mr Deasy's statement that 'the proudest word you will ever hear from an Englishman's mouth' is '*I paid my way*' includes money and clothes (2:244-58), and Bloom finds clothes 'Inhibitory' and, like narrow definitions of nationalism, 'inelastic to alterations of mass by expansion' (17: 1431-3).

49. Hugh Kenner, *The Portrait in Perspective*, in *Joyce's Portrait: Criticisms and Critiques*, edited by Thomas Connolly (London: Peter Owen, 1964), pp. 25-60, p. 34.



'We can't change the country. Let us change the subject' (16: 1171). To the colonised artist history and contemporaneity appear beyond redemption. It was an artistic awareness of this non-autonomy and the impossibility of belief which drove Stephen to leave Ireland (and the Bloomian environment) in search of 'life' at the close of *A Portrait*. Reading *A Portrait* in the light of *Ulysses* it can be seen that one reason for this exile is that the artistic acceptance of Joyce's 'practical realism' is unavailable to Stephen, for while considering himself a disbeliever and a heretic his artistic vocation remains hieratic

*April 26.* Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

*April 27.* Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead. (p. 253)

The Stephen Dedalus of *A Portrait* (who considers his name to evoke the 'fabulous artificer' as 'a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve', p. 169) had already symbolically dismissed what would later emerge in Joyce's work as the world of Bloom's *polis*: 'every mean shop legend bound his mind like the words of a spell and his soul shrivelled up sighing with age as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language' (p. 178). For Stephen the 'sign' of the everyday, so central to the Bloomian aesthetic, is dismissed in favour of a conception of the 'beautiful' which carries meaning 'in the literary tradition. In the marketplace it has another sense' (p. 213). Stephen's elite sense of the 'literary tradition' in *A Portrait* will be counterbalanced in *Ulysses* (through the approach to its birth and history as a narrative development which parallels an actual labour and finally dissolves into the 'everyday' of Dublin slang in 'Oxen of the Sun'), but even in the earlier novel Stephen recognises that this agonistic impulse towards a purely literary form of meaning, like his self-laceration in the experience of his own sexuality, takes place at a cost: 'His brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the signboards of the shops. By his monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality' (p. 92) - the cost manifesting itself as an estrangement from the 'real'.

This estrangement can be traced further back, and itself follows a complex trajectory whose threads are gathered into the 'allotropic' functions of *Ulysses*. If the gravitational centre of the Bloomian aesthetic and Joyce's 'practical realism' can be regarded as the body, then the 'reality' of the body for Stephen, and the 'realism' of Dublin that his art desires to disown, is symbolised by the mother. Bloom's sympathetic centre revolves around the mother (spotting Stephen's hungry sister he reflects



that 'Home always breaks up when the mother goes' [8: 30] and later he considers female birth-pains to ordain a 'Life with hard labour' [8: 378]), but for the Stephen of *A Portrait*, as his friend Cranly is forced to state, she is not a focus of sympathy but the index of the 'real':

- Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not. Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels? But whatever she feels, it, at least, must be real. (p. 241)

'*Amor Matris*: subjective and objective genitive' (2: 165-6) famously continues to be the benchmark of the 'real' in *Ulysses*, acting as a point where notions of subject and object become indistinct and interplay (mother love: simultaneously the mother's love for the child and the child's for its mother). One of the sub-plots of *Ulysses*, however, is the guilt consequent upon Stephen's refusal, as aesthete and sceptic, to reciprocate this love and pray for his mother on her deathbed. This refusal is anticipated by a passage in *Stephen Hero*, where, after reading his essay on art to her, and listening to her response - '... not that I grumble at the lot that Almighty God has given me and I have more or less a happy life with your father - but sometimes I feel that I want to leave this actual life and enter another - for a time' - Stephen declares coldly:

- You evidently weren't listening to what I said or else you didn't understand what I said. Art is not an escape from life. It's just the very opposite. Art, on the contrary, is the very central expression of life. An artist is not a fellow who dangles a mechanical heaven before the public. The priest does that. The artist affirms out of the fulness of his own life, he creates... Do you understand?<sup>50</sup>

The supreme artist is the individual that can escape the authority and 'mechanism' of systems (of language, nation and religion) and usurp the real by overriding the (real) emotional needs of the mother. This idealised freedom grants to art the ability to become a 'central expression of life' which can usurp the capacity to reproduce and 're-embody' that is the prerogative of the mother:

The artist, he imagined, standing in the position of mediator between the world of his experience and the world of his dreams - a mediator, consequently gifted with twin faculties, a selective faculty and a *reproductive faculty*. To equate these faculties was the secret of artistic success: the artist who could disentangle the subtle soul of the image from its mesh of defining circumstances most exactly and re-embody it in artistic circumstances chosen as the most exact for it in its new office, he was the supreme artist. (*Stephen Hero*, p. 67; emphasis added)

The 'betrayal' of realism that *A Portrait* suggests is intimately linked to the betrayal of the mother and of the 'body' of the mother in *Stephen Hero*. By the time of *A Portrait*, however, Stephen's 'esthetic theory' will distinguish between a theorisation of the art 'object', for which the aesthetic system of Thomas Aquinas is cited, and a theory of artistic production, whose metaphors remain maternal. Stephen notes that his aesthetic theory could be called 'applied Aquinas', but suggests that 'When we

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50. *Stephen Hero*, edited by Theodore Spencer (London: Ace Books, 1961), p. 75.

come to the phenomena of artistic conception, artistic gestation, and artistic reproduction I require a new terminology' (*A Portrait*, p. 209); this terminology will articulate itself through an aesthetics of what Koestenbaum might call modernist 'male maternity',<sup>51</sup> and evoke many aesthetic strictures which are distinctly Poundian.

These themes come to a focus in *Ulysses* with Stephen's discussion of Shakespeare in 'Scylla and Charybdis'. Here, however, the emphasis is subtly placed upon the mother as betrayer (through the implications of Gertrude's role in *Hamlet* and Mary's role in the Catholic faith) and upon the uncertain role of the female as a seductive and adulterous wife (Anne Hathaway). The main emphasis is now upon the disavowal of the uncertain authority (the 'legal fiction') of the father which develops into an assertion of the primacy of the inheritance of the 'mystical estate' of the precedent father and artist - 'Old father, old artificer':

- A father, Stephen said... is a necessary evil... Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son? (9: 828-45)

Stephen's disavowal of the 'uncertainty' of biological fatherhood in *Ulysses*, the metaphysical inconsequence of the reproductive role of the mother's body, and the brute materiality of their pairing in sexual intercourse (Stephen images it as 'an instant of blind rut', 9: 859) help to proclaim the supremacy of the 'mystical estate' of artistic creation within his aesthetics. Such creation is epitomised for him by Shakespeare, who, as betrayed husband, son without a father and bereaved father of Hamnet, proved himself able, through the dramatic treatment of these themes in *Hamlet*, to transcend the pitfalls of biology and mortality through art and declare himself 'the father of all his race' (9: 868-9) and 'Lord of language' (9: 455) in the estate of what *A Portrait* would call 'the literary tradition'.

The ramifications of this passage from 'Scylla and Charybdis' extend through Joyce's work. However, it should be immediately noted that ironic distances between aesthetics and life, fact and fiction are at work even as Stephen speaks. While his disengagements from paternity and biology describe a complete inversion of the 'bodily' aesthetics of Bloom, he himself exists in a thoroughly ironic relation to a theory of creativity that he doesn't believe (9: 1067) for he is remorselessly dogged by the memory and ghost of his mother, and, having returned to Ireland a heavy drinker, acts in the

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51. See Koestenbaum, 'T. S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria', p. 124.



library just as his (despised) father acts in the Ormond bar of 'Sirens - as a Dublin 'performer'. A further level of irony attaches itself to the episode in the fact that Stephen so obviously exists for interpreters of the work as a 'Hamlet' figure - this can be seen as not only intentional on Joyce's part but actually anticipated in the opening pages of *Ulysses* when Stephen is misrecognised as Hamlet or 'the ghost of his own father' by the Englishman Haines after Mulligan mockingly says of his theory that 'It's quite simple. He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father', eliciting the response 'What? Haines said, beginning to point to Stephen. He himself?' (1: 555-8).

It is important that in 'Scylla and Charybdis' Stephen's distrust of the maternal body and disengagement from the father (never wholly distinct from his revolt against the 'Fathers' of his Jesuit upbringing) is expressed through an assault on their authority and productive role by the 'mystical estate' of *art* - a factor which links Stephen's theory of artistic creativity directly to the subsumption of authority by aesthetics such as was promoted by Pound. Like Pound, too, Stephen promotes a sense of history as 'a nightmare' from which the artist is 'trying to awake' (2: 377) by outlining an aesthetic which might rearticulate and become 'the very central expression of life'.

For Pound, however, Stephen embodied an artistic ideal, just as Bloom embodied the 'mess' of modernity, and the tendency not of the characters but of the text itself to indicate the provisionality of its own values was ignored by Pound - just as the Homeric correspondences of the book were for him merely 'part of Joyce's mediaevalism and are chiefly his own affair, a scaffold, a means of construction, justified by the result, and justifiable by it only' ('Ulysses', p. 406). As the intertextual machinations of *Ulysses* became for Pound the sign of a purely ironic or empty augmentation of systems of belief (a sort of empty parallel to Eliot's use of Dantean allegory as 'the scaffold on which the poem is built'), and as Stephen became presented more and more as a mere *theorist* of art in *Ulysses* (and a theorist who didn't believe in his own theory) and an aesthete whose burden of disbelief and apostasy loomed larger than any actual artistic achievement, *Ulysses* became for Pound a paradoxical encyclopaedia of frigid systems of thinking. The proximity that the character of Stephen described to his own aesthetic economy was perhaps subconsciously misread by Pound, for Stephen appears *less* aware than Pound, overall, of the *mundane* sensualised body - or more determined than Pound to oust it from consideration - as the site of aesthetic significance. Pound perhaps recalled this 'frigidity' in Stephen's theorising, and attributed it to Joyce's obsession with systematised structures of



language and thought when in a late letter he wrote of his own work: 'As to the *form* of *The Cantos*: All I can say or pray is: *wait* till it's there... I haven't an Aquinas-map. Aquinas *not* valid now' (*Letters*, p. 323). The implication is, of course, that for writers such as Dante, Eliot and Joyce, such an authoritative map or foundation, even if extant, as in Joyce's case, only as an encyclopaedic system devoid of belief (Stephen is, as Cranly points out in *A Portrait*, 'supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve') was a necessity.<sup>52</sup> Such an aesthetic, to Pound's mind, merely reduplicated the 'void incertitude' of modernity instead of approaching it as an opportunity to re-ground history through the functions of the artist and artwork of *virtù*.

But the 'frigid' character of Stephen produces a specific critique of the Poundian artist, for Stephen is an artist whose own aesthetic authority is constantly in a state of crisis in the fiction in which he is embedded. In *A Portrait*, the 'Aquinas-map' of Stephen's aesthetic theory exists as a complete contradiction of the dynamics of the narrative in which it occurs. Stephen attempts to ground a theory of the artwork or the 'beautiful' upon Thomist thinking, struggling towards a definition of the 'esthetic emotion' as that which depends upon the exclusion of excited interaction between self and the world: 'The esthetic emotion... is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing' (p. 205). The 'artistic apprehension' of the beautiful rests upon similar principles of integrity and exclusion:

Aquinas says... *Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance...*

- In order to see that basket, said Stephen, your mind first of all separates the basket from the rest of the visible universe which is not the basket... the esthetic image is first luminously apprehended as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it. You apprehend it as *one* thing. You see it as one whole... That is *integritas*...

... Having first felt that it is *one* thing you now feel that it is a *thing*... That is *consonantia*.

... When you have apprehended that basket as one thing... You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks in the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing. (pp. 211-13.)

Stephen's activity describes a search for the *integritas* and non-relationality of the aesthetic domain and the 'selfbounded' 'thing' which the expanding artifices of *Ulysses* will consistently refute. To compound this, his own Thomistic enquiry actually proceeds through identical activities of comparison, contrast and difference ('your mind first of all separates the basket from the rest of the visible universe which is not the basket') to those which represented his definition of art (the 'literary

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52. *A Portrait*, p. 240. Eco proposes a mixture of 'supersaturation' of system and 'disbelief' as the signature of Joyce's work, suggesting that 'If you take away the transcendent God from the symbolic world of the Middle Ages, you have the world of Joyce', for he 'accumulates materials whose form captivates him but whose substance does not elicit his belief' (*The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, p. 7 and p. 84.)



tradition' as distinct from 'the marketplace'), his earlier sense of name and identity ('I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus', p. 93), and his formative interaction with his environment on the first page of *A Portrait* ('When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold... His mother had a nicer smell than his father... Uncle Charles was older than Dante', p. 7).<sup>53</sup> Rather than describing the autonomy or supremacy of the artwork *A Portrait* suggests that 'artistic apprehension' arises through the constant interplay of differences - differences which both Pound and Stephen seek to deny.

In *A Portrait* meaning also works through relation and difference: 'He kept his hands in the pocket of his belted grey suit. That was a belt. And a belt was also to give a fellow a belt [to strike him]' (p. 9), and here resides an observation of the workings of paronomasia that anticipates the matrix of portmanteau words, inter-suggestions, multi-lingual puns and sub-meanings that drive *Finnegans Wake*. More directly, however, the play of 'incertitude' in language in *A Portrait* looks forward to 'Scylla and Charybdis' and the authority of the 'mystical estate' of fatherhood which, like the central 'mystery' of the church, 'is founded... like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood' (9: 838-42). In 'Oxen of the Sun' Stephen, refracted through a fifteenth-century prose style, elaborates upon the depth of this void by introducing 'that blessed Peter on which rock was holy church for all ages founded' (14: 251-2) - alluding to a verse in the Gospel of Matthew where Christ declares the foundation of the church to rest upon a punned name: '... thou art Peter [Greek: *petros*], and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'.<sup>54</sup>

If for Pound the metaphor is a potentially metamorphic trope, for Joyce the pun, like *Ulysses* itself, attests to allotropism. It is a word able to exist in at least two or more different forms at one and the same time, one meaning not cancelling another or being substituted for another but relying upon the interplay of a preservation and cancellation of co-existent meaning.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the 'renegotiated' authority that the palindromic 'pun' ROMA/AMOR signals for Pound, however, the de-authorising

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53. The frequency with which binary oppositions occur in *A Portrait* has often been noted; see for instance Parrinder, *James Joyce*, p. 81, and Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern*, pp. 134-5.

54. Joyce would comment upon the composition of *Ulysses* that 'The Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church was built on a pun. It ought to be good enough for me' - cited in Ellmann's, *James Joyce*, p. 546. The biblical reference is to Matthew, 16, 18.

55. Derek Attridge, in an essay which primarily discusses the paronomasic language of *Finnegans Wake*, writes of the pun that it proves that language, 'like every other aspect of our existence, is touched with imperfection', 'it is ambiguity unashamed of itself' (see 'Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's Afraid of *Finnegans Wake*', in *On Puns: The Foundation of Language*, edited by Jonathan Culler [Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988], pp. 140-55, pp. 140-41).



movements of paranomasia are not halted by Joyce. In revealing the founding of the church to be dependent upon a proximity of signs which conflate meaning in a pun, and suggesting that such a 'void' underlies other systems of belief and legitimacy, Stephen opens the door to the 'apostolic succession' of the artist while concurrently recognising the ludic interplay of meanings, surfaces, discourses and systems of organisation and characterisation which structure *Ulysses* itself. Rather than augmenting a foundation or allowing art to attain the sole condition of *integritas* above its absence, the languages of Joyce's works disperse meaning within a multiformity of events and their narration.

Against the lack of a founding 'rock' that *Ulysses* reveals at the core of certainty, belief and meaning, the contrapuntal 'arsethetic' of the book will again promote the processing and sensual body. 'Lestrygonians' opens with the words 'Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butterscotch', and Bloom's subsequent meditations range over the possibility that the archetypal city is built not upon foundations but on food ('Piled up cities, worn away age after age. Pyramids in sand. Built on bread and onions' [8: 489-90]) and can be followed through his eavesdropping on George Russell and his companion and Bloom's observations upon their 'ethereal' vegetarianism ('Esthetes they are. I wouldn't be surprised if it was that kind of food you see produces the like waves of the brain the poetical' [8: 544-5]). This leads to a final suggestion that the world is doomed to cosmic entropy only if it can resist a sweet digestive recycling:

Waste of time. Gasballs spinning about, crossing each other, passing. Same old dingdong always. Gas: then solid: then world: then cold: then dead shell drifting around, frozen rock, like that pineapple rock. (8: 581-4)

Such associative trains, ending in mundane optimism, accumulate to pronounce Bloom 'a conscious reactor against the void of incertitude' (17: 2210-11). The 'rock' or foundation that the book finally arrives at, however, is not the paronomasic rock that reveals incertitude nor the rock of Ithaca, but the birthplace of Molly, Gibraltar. Molly's rock, significantly, is hollow - 'I suppose it must be the highest rock in existence the galleries and casemates and those frightful rocks and Saint Michaels cave with the icicles or whatever they call them hanging down' (18: 790-92) - and easily transforms itself into the hollow of her uterus, cancelling the 'incertitude' of the void with the ubiquity of the body:

if it got into you at all after I tried with the Banana but I was afraid it might break and get lost up in me somewhere because they once took something down out of a woman that was up there for years covered with limesalts theyre all mad to get in there where they come out of youd think they could never go far enough up and then theyre done with you till the next time yes because theres a wonderful feeling there so tender all the time (18: 803-9).



If *Ulysses* thematises the 'incertitude of the void' then it does so only to return, through the sensual experiences that fill the 'rock' that is the processing world and aestheticised body, to the procreating body of the mother - the reality of which, denied by Stephen, is posited as the 'rock' of a reality whose multiplicity and 'uncertainty' can be celebrated.

As Stephen asserts or attempts to re-negotiate the authority of the artist the narratives in which his character features ensure its dissipation. Stephen's pointing to the role of the pun in founding hierarchies of authority both validates a Poundian conception of an art which asserts its own power in the face of 'uncertainty' and deals a death-blow to the notion of art as defined by *integritas*. As if aware of the destabilising effect that his own theory has upon his Thomist thinking, the aesthetics of the 'supreme artist' later make a distinctly Poundian effort to recover language from this fated uncertainty. Just as Pound utilises the authority of metamorphic 'operations in nature' to underwrite his art, Stephen in 'Circe' wishes to revert to a language of 'structural rhythm':

STEPHEN

(triumphaliter) *Salvi facti sunt.*

(*He flourishes his ashplant, shivering the lamp image, shattering light over the world...*)

LYNCH

So that?

STEPHEN

(*looks behind*) So that gesture, not music or odour, would be a universal language, the gift of tongues rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm.

(15: 98-107)

Stephen's heroic posturing and his wish to shatter 'light over the world' and make it whole or 'save' it ('*Salvi facti sunt*') through a language rooted not in speech or the uncodeable senses ('music or odour') but in gestures which repeat 'the first entelechy, the structural rhythm' of the world, echo Pound's idealisation of the 'substantial' ideogram.<sup>56</sup>

If one of the political functions of *Ulysses* is to critique the ideology of the 'supreme artist', however, this process must be read backwards into *A Portrait*. Here it is progressively shown, through the narrative development of the artist's life 'as a young man' which is at the same time a charting of the development of an artist's style and temperament, that a curious 'paralysis' of the artist and of writing occurs.

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56. Poundian strictures are attributed to Stephen again in 'Ithaca' where his distrust of 'aquacities of thought and language' are indicated (17: 240).

As the novel opens with a stress upon differentiation and opposition ('When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold...') it develops into a late lyricism which can only repeat itself in parallel clauses, in *chiasmus*, hovering over its subject and attempting to express it through the 'music' of words:

O what sweet music! His soul was all dewy wet. Over his limbs in sleep pale cool waves of light had passed. He lay still, as if his soul lay amid cool waters, conscious of faint sweet music... A spirit filled him, pure as the purest water, sweet as dew, moving as music.<sup>57</sup>

The lyrical style in which the growing Stephen is narrated in *A Portrait* and the *integritas* that its self-involvement appears to gesture toward, will be interrogated by the narrative of the novel no less than it will be parodied by *Ulysses*.<sup>58</sup> Stephen's own theory of the development of literature from 'The lyrical form... the simplest verbal vesture of an instant of emotion' into the impersonal 'dramatic form' (*A Portrait*, pp. 214-5) contradicts the actual stylisation of the novel, which proceeds from the third-person narration by his father (Once upon a time...) to the 'lyric'-self of the diary ('I desire to press in my arms the loveliness that has not yet come into the world', p. 251). More specifically, the event that the quoted passage narrates in *A Portrait* appears to be a wet-dream, but the relative inadequacy of its language to convey erotic experience is underscored by its ambiguity - Stephen's 'late' lyrical style in *A Portrait* becoming 'paralysed' in the literary conventions of self-expression as surely as his sexuality is idealised and paralysed by social convention.

If the 'void' of uncertainty will not be countered by the authority of a Poundian or Daedalian poetics in *Ulysses* but by the expansion a Bloomian 'arseore-ial' aesthetics, then the 'impersonal' dramatic style that *A Portrait* valorises is not realised in the text itself but in its expansion to include the relation of *the author* to his own character and characters. Such a relationship is outlined in the presence of an anonymous meta-narrational figure in *Ulysses* which occasionally ironises the psychic (textual) life of the novel's characters - as does the voice in 'Sirens' which persistently alludes to Bloom's cuckolding - or allows the 'other' of discourse to erupt into the narrative.<sup>59</sup> Significantly but ambivalently, only in

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57. *A Portrait*, p. 216. It is often pointed out that Joyce's writing in *A Portrait* is close to lyric poetry - 'prose-poetry disguised as broken narrative', as one critic has recently claimed; see M. L. Rosenthal, 'The "Actaeon-Principle": Political Aesthetic of Joyce and the Poets', *Southern Review*, 23 (1987), pp. 541-56, p. 542.

58. Stephen's Thomistic ideals of *stasis* and *integritas* are perhaps parodically at issue in Bloom's meditations upon 'the modern art of advertisement', whose images can be 'condensed in trilateral monoideal symbols, vertically of maximum visibility (divined), horizontally of maximum legibility (deciphered) and of magnetising efficacy to arrest involuntary attention...' (17: 581-4).

59. As in 'Cyclops' and 'Circe'. Locating and identifying this 'presence' is made difficult in the overlaid narratives of *Ulysses*, but at least one critic has labelled it the presence of a textual 'Arranger' (see David Hayman, *'Ulysses': The Mechanics of Meaning* [Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982], pp. 88-93). Such an 'arranger' complicates the relationship that the author 'Joyce' and *Ulysses* have to their own authority. An insight into the way that such complexity can be *overlooked* can be found in the discussion of Pound, Joyce and textual authority given by Lindberg



the symbolic freedom of Molly's monologue does this authorial 'presence' perhaps allow itself to be addressed - 'O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh sweets of sin...', 18: 1128-30) - but when Stephen muses upon his birthday the fact of his birth 'today' this points to him as the creation of an author and a reader at the moment that he is encountered and inscribed in the text:

ZOE

What day were you born?

STEPHEN

Thursday. Today.

ZOE

Thursday's child has far to go. (*she traces the lines on his hand*) Line of fate. (15: 3682-8)

The consideration of Joyce's work in terms of an 'allotropy' of states and functions must take account of the author not only as a refined 'presence' outside the text or as an intrusive presence which occasionally breaks its surface, but, in the figure of Stephen, an autobiographically thematised and characterised aspect of the writing self. Joyce left Ireland, so did Stephen, and Bloom probably won't. Stephen returned, but his author maintains a distance needed from the possibilities of a self that his actual self has 'ousted' that allows an involuted self-critique - Joyce appearing through Stephen as a 'guest' in the Dublin of his text.<sup>60</sup>

If Stephen Dedalus 'is' Joyce, however, he is Joyce the artist in a 'paralysed' form - what his brother figured when writing of Joyce's self-representation in *Stephen Hero* as a 'confession' in 'a foreign language'.<sup>61</sup> As the parallels between the bird-girl passage of *A Portrait* and 'Nausicaa' suggest, autobiographical and auto-critical movements comprise the shifts that make this language both 'foreign' and autobiographical in its relation to Joyce the author and 'artist as a young man'. For its contemporary readership *Ulysses* too appeared to be written in a 'foreign language', but for a different reason. As Kenner suggests, '*Ulysses* seemed, to most readers able to pick up a copy, not a mirror of

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when she claims that Joyce (rather than Pound) must be seen as one who aspires to become a 'master of language'. In 'A Battle of Puns and the Extra Pound' she charts the 'Oedipal' relationship of Joyce and Pound to their literary forbears and suggests that Joyce's goal is 'the mastery of language itself' (p. 160; Stephen will say much the same of Shakespeare, although Lindberg ignores the embedded possibilities of self-critique that this might imply) by means of a grapple with tradition, while Pound's writing is exemplified by irreverence and discontinuities. She concludes that 'Pound's tradition, his use of disparate sources, is too radically individualistic to admit of the control Joyce exerts over his Shakespeare and Homer' (p. 173).

60. Elaborating upon the idea of the 'death' of the author Roland Barthes suggests that 'It is not that the author may not "come back" in the Text, in his text, but then he does so as a guest'. Significantly, however, this applies in the main to the novelist, who 'is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic' (Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image Music Text*, translated by Stephen Heath [London: Fontana Press, 1977], pp. 155-64, p. 161).

61. 'Jim is thought to be very frank about himself but his style is such that it might be contended that he confesses in a foreign language' (Stanislaus Joyce cited in Ellmann's *James Joyce*, p. 148).

Homer, not a story at all, but something as featureless as a telephone directory'.<sup>62</sup> As the critical history of Joyce's work shows, reading *Ulysses* is something which has to be *learned* - one of the reasons for this being that traditional patterns and centres of meaning in the literary work are carefully dispersed, frustrating the reader's expectations, undercutting the usually cumulative (or augmentative) act of reading and maximising the distance between reader and text. Such an involuted approach to autobiography and auto-critique involves a constant folding-back of the author and work onto themselves, a wearing away of the 'foundation' of author and text alike that de-authorises both to the degree that its movements are self-critical and anti-augmentative, thematising and interrogating their own authority in such a way as to leave each instance or reading of it 'a burnt up field' behind it which author and reader gaze back upon.

The idea that a characteristic of Joyce's work might be a pressure to read his autobiography and his aesthetics 'backwards', through a reversal of the augmentative procedures of authority, is not a trite one, nor is it a new one.<sup>63</sup> An idea of this 'reverse impulse' can be gained if it is appreciated that Joyce takes his own (or Stephen's) advice seriously when he insists that the narrator 'Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past' (9: 89) and withhold unnecessary narrative information (summary, pre-emptive or omniscient) that overfills the needs of a minute transcription of character and consciousness (it must also be appreciated that the signifying overflow of *Finnegans Wake* will go on to relativise this 'practical realism' in its turn). Hugh Kenner has suggested that such a procedure in *Ulysses* institutes an 'aesthetic of delay' in any reading of it,<sup>64</sup> for every scene in the novel is related at least twice, and information regarding the significance of events and objects accumulates only, as it were, in retrospect - the future 'plunging to the past' as the reader reassesses and repossesses meaning through re-reading. This is true, for instance, of the gradually disclosed emotional complexity of Bloom's cuckolding, the significance of which, once discovered, must be re-read into the novel from the beginning. This 'backward' or traversive reading of Joyce of course occurs between works - as the transformed aesthetics of sex that operate through the beach-girl in 'Nausicaa' and *A Portrait* and the

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62. Kenner, *Ulysses*, p. 2.

63. Robert Young suggests that *Finnegans Wake* most obviously signalled a demand to re-read Joyce's other texts in an inverted chronological order in his editorial introduction to Maud Ellmann's 'Disremembering Dedalus: "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 189-206, p. 189. Maud Ellmann closes her study of Pound and Eliot, *The Poetics of Impersonality*, with a discussion of 'Shem the Penman' writing *himself* in *Finnegans Wake* 'with his own excrement on "the only foolscap available", his own flesh' - which can perhaps be seen as Joyce's ultimate statement upon the autobiographical involution of the 'body' of his writing.

64. For Kenner's examples of the 'aesthetic of delay' (from which I take the following Ballast Office clock incident) see chapter 8 of Kenner's *Ulysses*.



expansion of Stephen's aesthetics of *integritas* into the 'mass' of *Ulysses* show. Significantly, Bloom 'dissented tacitly from Stephen's views on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature' (17: 29-30), and dissented perhaps because the work in which he appeared constantly problematises and re-directs any such affirmation.

One of the most important instances of this backward 'plunge' in *Ulysses* actually takes place when Bloom passes the Ballast Office clock in 'Lestrygonians':

Mr Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Think no more about that. After one. Timeball on the ballastoffice is down. Dunsink time. Fascinating little book that is of sir Robert Ball's. Parallax. I never exactly understood... (8: 108-11)

Bloom's checking of the time-ball clock is actually prompted by a disturbance of his thinking by the possibility that Boylan might give Molly a venereal disease. His thoughts continue by association to a book by Robert Ball, the certainty of whose identity (as the author of a book on astronomy) is withheld until 'Ithaca' (17: 1373) although the idea of 'parallax' is frequently entertained by Bloom. Parallax (the apparent displacement of position or direction in an object as observed from two different positions) is a term that helps to put the shifting perspectives and directions of reading that *Ulysses* demands into focus. It also, in this case, brings into focus the specific displacements that Joyce's aesthetic is undergoing between works and between authorial selves, for the Ballast Office clock which Bloom barely perceives and which acts as a superficial paronomasic link between an object in the landscape, a book and a concept, is precisely the object which the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* singled out as an item of 'street furniture' which, if really *seen*, could attain an epiphany as the site of its own *integritas*:

... He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. Cranly questioned the inscrutable dial of the Ballast Office...

Yes, said Stephen. I will pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and I know what it is: epiphany. (*Stephen Hero*, p. 186)

By the time of *Ulysses* and its unobtrusive reference to this earlier manuscript (the text demands that the reader 'refer to it, catch a glimpse of it' as Bloom and Stephen had the Ballast Office clock) the artistic revelation of the world through Stephen's art has been displaced - or re-positioned through parallax - by the disseminating 'mass' aesthetics of Bloom.

If the politics of *Ulysses* work to show the collapse of 'life' into art through the interplay of difference at work in a renegotiated aesthetic, then they also force a re-reading of the aesthetics, writing practices and 'life' of the author - realising a correspondence between life and art that takes place at a different

level to that which Pound's writing desires. These features of the body of Joyce's writing suggest that we are not witnessing, as in Pound, the control of an artist of *virtù*, but the studied and complex attrition of precisely such control. A critique of the authority of the self as artist is gathered up from Joyce's own writing history and occurs under the sign of the aesthetic in *Ulysses* - a self-distanciation and interrogation that Pound's impersonal 'assertion of a positive' cannot countenance. If it is Joyce, not Pound, who manages to erase the 'difference' between art and life in a modern artwork, then it is by collapsing the boundaries between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic and challenging authority in such a way that we cannot 'read for power' but only witness its constant dispersal. We read for re-interpretation, expansion and re-evaluation with Joyce, where in Pound the emphasis must always fall on positive 'valuation' and the 'elimination' of aesthetic excess. Arguably, Joyce had sensed the demand for authority that modernity would place upon its art, and had seen himself bound to a task of aesthetic self-de-authorisation which the intrusive narrative voice that questions Stephen's enthusiasm for the artist's 'mystical estate' perhaps augurs:

- ... Paternity may be a legal fiction ...  
What the hell are you driving at?
- ... I know. Shut up. Blast you. I have reasons.  
*Amplius. Adhuc. Iterum. Postea.*
- ... Are you condemned to do this? (9: 844-9)



## 5. Lawrence and Pound: The Aesthetics of Antagonism

Having taken their cue from theoretical engagements with figures like Joyce, contemporary assessments of the dynamics of modernism now tend to emphasise the 'counter-discourses' which can be seen to exist within its writing, noting ways in which modernism 'both participates in and resists its narratives of mastery'.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that Pound's writing, despite the antipathy towards authority which it programmatically asserts, remains predominantly 'participatory' and not 'resistant' in most assessments. Indeed, a Pound-Joyce polarity has developed in which Joyce's textual politics are often upheld as the progressive modernist antithesis of Pound's 'totalising' urges towards an aesthetics of order.

Such polarities, dominant in many readings, often simplify and obscure the diversity of modernism's treatment of the relationship between aesthetics and authority. This is apparent in the opposition which has developed between the writing of Joyce and Pound, for it is an opposition that has become so stable that sometimes the prioritised attributes bestowed upon one writer at the expense of the other can be reallocated without disturbing the symmetry of the comparison.<sup>2</sup>

However, if the aesthetics of Pound and Joyce are often considered as respective extremes of a polarity which typifies the excesses of modernism, then the neatness of this patterning is disturbed, and

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1. I take these phrases from Bette London's account of the effect of postmodern theory on revaluations of modernism in *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Forster, Conrad, and Woolf* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 5.

2. This can be seen in Lindberg's reading of the Pound-Joyce opposition outlined in note 59 of the previous chapter. Marjorie Perloff has similarly retained this polarity but inverted the valuation of its textual politics by contrasting the aesthetic 'impurity' of Pound's writing (or the persistence of his disjunctive poetic form in essays, letters, etc.) with Joyce's stylised conformity in these areas, regarding this as evidence of 'two major strains of modernism' which produce 'very different sense[s] of how *art* is to be related to *life*'. The texts Perloff uses, however, grotesquely predetermine the outcome of her analysis - an anarchic letter from Pound to Eliot is placed against a 'controlled' letter from Joyce to Eliot, but Joyce's letter actually communicates the death of his own father; see "'Letter, penstroke, paperspace': Pound and Joyce as Co-respondents", in *The Dance of the Intellect*, pp. 74-87, p. 85 and p. 76.

the complexity of modernism's own sense of the antipathy between art and authority underscored, when the work of a writer like D. H. Lawrence is considered.

Formal distinctions between Lawrence and Pound are easily made,<sup>3</sup> but in their mutual reaction against authority their thinking can be seen to follow parallel paths. Modernity for both was often conceived in terms of a dissociation between the aesthetic and the 'vital' - as Lawrence would insist, 'We have lost the art of living'<sup>4</sup> - and, like Pound, Lawrence would accordingly adopt the oppositional voice of the prophetic artist. 'We have to hate our immediate predecessors', he characteristically writes, 'to get free from their authority', and for modernity art provided many of the tools which would aid in what the younger Lawrence imaged as a 'demolition' of a temple of atrophied ideals.<sup>5</sup>

Like Pound, Lawrence would eschew rational forms and received 'dogmas': 'knowledge is an experience, not a formula' he would claim, while looking to the unconscious, the instinctive and the intuitive for ways to 'learn how *not to know*'.<sup>6</sup> One approach to the emancipation from such forms involved an exploration of the repressed category of the sensual body, but this would lead Lawrence not to a celebration of the 'mass' aestheticised body as it appeared in the work of Joyce, but to an interest in archaic and mythic aesthetics and forms which Lawrence would locate in different cultures and periods at different points in his career. As with Pound however, the Greece which pre-dated the Platonic 'split' figured large in Lawrence's thinking, for it helped to negate idealist and dualist legacies by presenting in the union of the sexual and the religious impulse (the 'Eros of the sacred mysteries') a potent prelapsarian paradigm.<sup>7</sup>

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3. In assessing their poetry, for instance A. Walton Litz considers Lawrence's personal, lyrical and 'confessional' forms to exist in an opposition to Pound's 'impersonal' verse, an opposition which he considers to 'symbolize the most fundamental divisions in modern literature' (see 'Lawrence, Pound, and Early Modernism', in *D. H. Lawrence: A Centenary Celebration*, edited by Peter Balbert and Philip L. Marcus [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985], pp. 15-28, pp. 27-8 and p. 18).

4. *D. H. Lawrence and Italy: Twilight in Italy; Sea and Sardinia; Etruscan Places* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985); *Etruscan Places*, p. 59.

5. The first quotation is taken from *Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, volume one, edited by Harry T. Moore (London: William Heinemann, 1962), p. 182, the second from a 1913 review in which Lawrence writes of 'the Temple' which 'art has been demolishing for us: Nietzsche, the Christian religion as it stood; Hardy, our faith in our own endeavour; Flaubert, our belief in love...' (see 'Georgian Poetry: 1911-1912', in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Edward D. McDonald [London: William Heinemann, 1936], pp. 304-7, p. 304).

6. *Etruscan Places*, p. 51, and *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 76.

7. 'Foreword to *Women in Love*', in *Women in Love*, edited by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 485-6. In 'Introduction to These Paintings' (*Phoenix*, pp. 551-84) Lawrence would present Plato as the 'arch-priest' of a 'crucifixion' which subordinated 'the procreative body' to 'the mental consciousness' (p. 569). For a rare reading of a *relation* between Pound and Lawrence which stresses Pound's influence on Lawrence in providing a (geographical) focus for their shared desire to realise an 'earthly' rather than a 'divine' paradise ('Paradise is after life, and I for one am not keen on anything that is *after* life' Lawrence writes in 'Why the Novel Matters', in *Phoenix*, pp. 533-538, p. 534), see David Roessel's 'Pound, Lawrence, and "The Earthly Paradise"', *Paideuma* 18 (1989), pp. 227-230.



In politics, and again like Pound, Lawrence could apparently espouse autocratic, fiercely individualist and collectivist ideals simultaneously. Despite his frequent disavowals of Nietzschean thought, he would approach the political through an ideal of empowerment whose realisation, in Nietzsche as in Pound, was to be signalled by the disappearance of the 'negativity' of authority:

... the mass must grant *authority* where they deny power. Authority now takes the place of power, and we have 'ministers' and public officials and policemen. Then comes the grand scramble of ambition, competition, and the mass treading one another in the face, so afraid they are of power.

The reign of love is passing, and the reign of power is coming again.

The day of popular democracy is nearly done. Already we are entering the twilight...

Power is *pouvoir*: to be able to.

Might: the ability to make: to bring about that which may be.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the complex and often contradictory impulses of Lawrence's politics, such statements have allowed his explorations of modern political and philosophical trends to be dismissed as manifestations of proto-fascism, and it is common to bring Lawrence and Pound together in this area only - their shared notoriety as modernist advocates of 'the spirit of something akin to Nazism'.<sup>9</sup>

The idea of the political is never straightforward in Lawrence, however, as its value is always context-bound and historically limited, and he would react to attempts to universalise any single political ideal with suspicion.<sup>10</sup> To his thinking, outmoded political authority displayed a Trojan-horse tendency to reappear in new guises not only in modern democracies but in revolutionary movements

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8. Quotations are taken from *Apocalypse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 16-17, and 'Blessed are the Powerful', in *A Selection from Phoenix*, edited by A. A. H. Inglis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 505-13, p. 505 and p. 509. This last essay can be read as a critique of what Lawrence considered to be the Nietzschean idea of the centrality of the conscious 'will' in human affairs, against which he promoted an idea of impersonal 'power' - or a power that precisely transcends all known *human* categories. See also the end of *Aaron's Rod* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950) where the narrative engages with Nietzsche but insists, in a Poundian spirit, upon ideals of submission and mastery that involve 'No subservience... No slavery. A deep, unfathomable free submission' (p. 346). See also John Burt Foster Jr.'s discussion of the relationship between Nietzsche and Lawrence where he argues that despite the former's influence, the major emphasis in Lawrence's writing can always be seen to fall upon 'discovering rivals rather than acknowledging models' (*Heirs To Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* [Princeton and Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1981], p. 180).

9. I take this quotation from F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 21; although Leavis dismisses such assessments of Lawrence, they have a long and continuing history (see for instance Graham Hough's views on Lawrence's politics in chapter 5 of *The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* [London: Duckworth, 1968], and John Carey's recent treatment of the relation between Lawrence's thinking and what he regards as Nietzsche's proto-fascist doctrine of egoism and power in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* [London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992], pp. 75-80). Such views were given added credibility by Bertrand Russell's late and influential portrait of Lawrence as a proto-fascist. For a discussion of this background which stresses Lawrence's life-long opposition to the entrenched liberalism which Russell espoused see Rick Ryland's essay 'Lawrence's Politics', in *Rethinking Lawrence*, edited by Keith Brown (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990), pp. 163-80.

10. In *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), for instance, Lawrence would insist on both ascendant and decadent impulses in the history of emancipation from authority: 'Democracy in America was never the same as Liberty in Europe. In Europe Liberty was a great life-throb. But in America Democracy was always something anti-life' (p. 59), and in *St Mawr* Bolshevism and fascism alike are considered as superficial characteristics of a 'mysterious potency of evil' (see *The Complete Short Novels*, edited by Keith Sagar and Melissa Partridge [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982], pp. 341-2).

such as Pound selectively but passionately supported. Thus in his late mystical and 'prophetic' book, *Apocalypse*, Lawrence would configure Leninism as the denial of the power of the 'collective self' and the intensification of liberal democracy's individualist ideals - ideals which give rise only to the 'frictional misery of trying to destroy power' (p. 17).

The term 'frictional' is important in its context here and provides a path into Lawrence's thinking on 'empowerment', for it suggests an undesired state of antagonistic difference or separation between the political and the 'collective self' which 'authority' must mediate. Ideally, the political must disappear from the experience of collectivity for Lawrence, for 'men either live in glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in a frictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine' (*Studies*, p. 10). Thus the political worked to 'frictionally' abstract, differentiate and deplete areas of existence that Lawrence insisted could be experienced only in terms of an 'empowered' unity.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of a disabling friction permeates many of Lawrence's novels as a historical and ontological condition which must be overcome. It is a 'sense of electric surcharge everywhere, frictional, a neurasthenic haste for excitement' which opens the directionless post-war scenario of *Aaron's Rod* (p. 22), and Aaron's departure from this environment initiates an individual but de-personalised search for a sense of power and singularity ('life single, not life double', p. 155) through which this friction can be transcended. Undesired 'frictions' and differentiations also pervade Lawrence's explorations of sexuality and signify conditions of self-conscious, 'mental' or masturbatory non-union within the sex act - the 'personal' and the mental being 'frictional and destructive' in their relation to the 'blood-desire' in his anatomy of modern sexual relations.<sup>12</sup>

The notion of a rancorous differentiation or friction inheres also in Lawrence's philosophical approach to what he considered the social 'production' of the isolate self and the 'The subjective-objective consciousness', for the processes of individuation comprised for him a primal loss of a relation between self-other-and-world experienced 'as if all were connected by a living membrane'. 'The true self is not aware that it is a self', Lawrence would insist, declaring that 'What must be broken is the egocentric absolute of the individual'.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, Lawrence would pose a 'positive' sense of the

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11. For a fuller expression of Lawrence's hostility to the abstraction of a 'political' from an empowered self see 'Democracy', in *Phoenix*, pp. 699-718.

12. 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', in *A Selection from Phoenix*, pp. 327-361, p. 352. The opening chapters of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (edited by John Lyon [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990]) themselves posit a post-war frictional 'artificiality' as a modern condition.

13. Quotations are taken from 'The Individual Consciousness V. The Social Consciousness', in *Phoenix*, pp. 761-4, pp. 761-2, and Lawrence's review of 'The Social Basis of Consciousness, by Trigant Burrow', *ibid*, pp. 377-82, p. 379 and p. 382.



unconscious against what he saw as Freud's 'vicious' or repressive formulation of it. His most extensive treatment of this theme occurs in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, where his resistance to Freudian notions of an 'unconscious which is the inverted reflection of our ideal consciousness' (p. 212) is articulated through metaphors of changing 'energies', 'flows' and 'sympathies' whose essentially anti-theoretical force echo Pound and similarly anticipate more recent 'anti-Oedipal' paradigms of desire and the psyche.<sup>14</sup> For Lawrence the production of 'The subjective-objective consciousness' violated an initial unity between mind, body and world, and he would configure modern sexuality *and* modern aesthetics as related phenomena which continued to dissipate primal energies in mental 'friction'.<sup>15</sup>

Just as the world and the psyche, body and mind need to re-realise a pre-conscious 'flow' that transcends their later decompartmentalisation, so the political, Lawrence suggests, requires a return to a prior condition where its necessity disappears in the pre-conscious, for 'Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom' (*Studies*, p. 12). These impulses towards the recovery of a totality of experience through the resolution or internalisation of 'friction' are frequently considered to be symptomatic of Lawrence's authoritarian philosophical and political ideals.<sup>16</sup> Lawrence's politics are related to and as 'ambivalent' as Pound's, and are similarly inseparable from his aesthetics. However, as will be shown, the effect of this unity in Lawrence works precisely to *problematise* the relationship between aesthetics and power, art and the 'real', and the speculative and the 'lived'. Despite the intimacy of their thinking in other areas, it is the interinvolvement of an antipathy to authority both within and *with* his own aesthetic programme which finally distinguishes Lawrencean from Poundian modernism, and brings it closer, according to the terms of this study, to a Joycean self-reflexiveness and inbuilt critique. What a discussion of the dynamics of Lawrence's writings will suggest is that one

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14. As evidenced in the frequent reference made to Lawrence in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.

15. Lawrence would promote 'friction' as a decadent element in what had become a mere 'frenzy of sensual satisfaction' in sexual relations in *Women in Love* (edited by Charles L. Ross [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986], p. 475; note that all references in the text are to this edition). In 'Introduction to These Paintings' he would consider the demise of a collective sense of intuitive 'physical communion' and 'flesh-and-blood kinship' to have been consolidated by the Renaissance experience of syphilis, since which time an abstract ideal of 'political oneness' took the place of a prior, apolitical and 'instinctive' bond. In the same essay the 'death' of the intuitive and instinctive self is adduced to explain modern 'frictional' and masturbatory responses to the 'physicality' of art - 'The mind and spirit alone can never really grasp a work of art', Lawrence writes, 'though they may, in masturbating fashion, provoke the body into an ecstasized response' (see p. 556 and p. 574).

16. As in Adorno's formulation: 'that which tolerates nothing beyond itself is understood to be the whole'. The sexual dimensions of such authoritarian 'symptoms' (so similar to Pound's) were explored by Kate Millett in chapter 5 of *Sexual Politics* (London: Virago, 1970); her influential discussion of Lawrence's 'phallocraticism' stresses his denial of any 'subversive female "friction"' (p. 240).

of the tragic shortfallings of Pound's own aesthetics must be considered as a lack of exhaustiveness in their own artistic urge to 'de-authorise'.

### Lawrence *Contra* Pound: Against the Aesthetics of Power

The description of Lawrence's writing as 'modernist' is itself problematic for many reasons, but not least because the greater part of his energies were poured into the form of the realist novel.<sup>17</sup> Lawrence's relationship with the novel is complex, however, for within this inherited form he would thematise the modern, challenge its gathering orthodoxies, and reflect sceptically upon the possibility of the realisation of its various ideals.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in Lawrence's use of the novel-form can be seen a progressively self-reflexive highlighting of the *absence* of what the novel once supposedly reflected and informed - a cohesive community and consensual value system grounded upon historical continuities; the *disappearance* of such continuities becomes for Lawrence a central aspect of the experience of the modern. To a great extent, Lawrence's writing internalises this as a sensed 'breakdown' of the social and the political. The absence of the conditions for the novel themselves enter the Lawrencean work as thematic antagonisms and narrative 'breakdowns' which eventually emerge (most noticeably in works like *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*) as tensions between fictional narrative, travel writing, essayistic prose and verse - tensions which in themselves probably justify description as a new genre.<sup>19</sup>

The Lawrencean novel, then, is predicated upon principles of conflict and unevenness, but these inhere in the writing not only at formal levels but in narrative language and characterisation themselves - predominantly as manifestations of what he described as a character's passage through 'allotropic states'.<sup>20</sup> Although far different in tone to Joyce's presentation of 'allotropic' conditions of discourse,

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17. It has become common to categorise Lawrence's work generally as an historical hybrid such as 'late Romanticism' (see Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern*, p. 17) or to focus upon one specific aspect of it (his poetics for example) and consider him a 'Romantic in modern dress' (see Sandra M. Gilbert, *Acts of Attention: The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972], p. 10).

18. Tony Pinkney has recently claimed that Lawrence must be considered as 'modernist, counter-modernist and meta-modernist', for 'his novels are, by turn, classic examples of modernism, polemical challenges to its orthodoxies, and general reflections upon its overall conditions of possibility' (Pinkney, *D. H. Lawrence* [London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990], p. 3). Mention of the complex 'synthesis' of realism and modernism that Lawrence epitomises can be found in Peter Faulkner's *Modernism* (London and New York: Methuen, 1977), pp. 60-65, and Eysteinsson's *The Concept of Modernism*, p. 118.

19. For a full discussion of the disappearance of consensus and the appearance of formal 'breakdown' as features of a Lawrencean genre see Michael Bell's *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), especially pp. 190-202, p. 148 and pp. 161-4.

20. 'You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable *ego* of the character', Lawrence writes, 'There is another *ego*, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states...' (*Letters*, p. 282).



the changing, unstable and conflictual nature of such 'states' in Lawrence's writing need only 'outline' character. The 'instability' of the modern ego and its relativity in changing relationships and contexts could be explored fully in the novel as Lawrence conceived it for, as all of his discursive treatments of the genre imply, it allowed a complex approach to ideas of inter-relation, flux and change *because* it itself retained established conventions and form.<sup>21</sup>

The 'politics' of the Lawrencean novel thus insist, at multiple levels, upon the co-presence of past and emergent forms. The way that this functions at the levels of theme and characterisation can be seen if his politically engaged and 'topical' novel *Kangaroo* is briefly considered. As the earlier *Aaron's Rod* had tried to define the individual 'beyond love', so *Kangaroo* would continue this theme by interrogating a variety of early fascism, for the flaw in this political creed as Lawrence presented it would emerge as the eponymous political leader's final dependence upon 'love' or an inherited and pernicious 'love-ideal' as the source of political rejuvenation, cohesion and authority.<sup>22</sup> *Kangaroo* interrogates this ideal at the level of character by holding elements of 'old forms and sentimentalities' in relation to the new 'balance' of 'flows' that comprise the often fraught search for a renewed emotional relationship undertaken by the semi-autobiographical characters of Harriet and Somers.<sup>23</sup> *Kangaroo* desires Somers to become the movement's ideologist, but the viability of such a position is debated not 'politically' but primarily through the questions of power and 'mastery' that evolve in the emotional relationship between Harriet and Somers. The changing dynamics of this allotropic 'marriage' establish starting points for a series of concentric relations which *expand* into the social and political spheres. *Kangaroo* thus becomes a 'record of emotional adventures, flounderings in feelings' (p. 308) whose conflicts in changing personal contexts remain central to questions of political association - rendering

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21. See for instance 'Why the Novel Matters', 'Art and Morality', in *Phoenix*, pp. 521-6, and 'Morality and the Novel', *ibid*, pp. 527-32.

22. *Kangaroo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p. 361. While Australia is figured as a potentially pristine continent where 'authority was a dead letter' (p. 28), Lawrence considered a renewal of emotional and sexual relationships to be central to meaningful change, and *Kangaroo's* seductive mixture of paternal and maternal appeal reveals the political exploitation of a residual 'love-ideal' which Somers finally repudiates. Later Wilhelm Reich would stress the presence of such traditionalist appeals (to the sense of sexual morality, to the strength of family bonds) in fascist ideology in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (translated by Vincent R. Carfagno [London: Souvenir Press, 1972]).

23. The first quoted phrase is taken from Lawrence's letters - although his enthusiasm for the *avant-garde* art of his contemporaries was always heavily qualified he did express enthusiasm for Marinetti and the Italian Futurists for what he saw as their attempt to purge 'the old forms and sentimentalities' and bring a new 'physiology of matter' to bear upon a moribund humanism and idealism (*Letters*, p. 279 and p. 281); the idea of a new 'balance' of 'flows' in personal and political relationships arises in *Kangaroo*, p. 333. The 'semi-autobiographical' impulses of Lawrence's writing are well known, two other 'self' portraits being Rawdon Lilly in *Aaron's Rod* and Birkin in *Women in Love*. Such self-characterisation contributes to the impulse towards self-critique which I will emphasise in Lawrence's work, attesting to the fact that, as Aaron says of Lilly in *Aaron's Rod*, he was 'so very outspoken. He gave himself away so much' (p. 335-6).



the novel's ability to pin-point the 'love-ideal' as an aspect of proto-fascism's reactionary power particularly acute.

Despite the 'breakdown' of novelistic form which is the signature of Lawrencean modernism, then, there remains a concern with the changing 'politics' of emotional interaction which for him only the novel could adequately plumb and extensively contextualise. For such reasons his attitude to *avant-garde* anti-novelistic experimentation would remain sceptical, and he would see only limitation in what he considered to be both its arrogantly dismissive treatment of novelistic 'character' and its static, 'self-conscious' and 'photographic' transcription of the detail of psychic life. These aspects of the anti-novel, for Lawrence, elided precisely the 'various elements in the creative flux' which, if the interactive contexts of the traditional novel were retained, could be produced precisely by the tensions *between* the modern and the non-modern, the subjective and the impersonal, the emotional and the political.<sup>24</sup>

Lawrence's writings on the nature of the novel attempt to establish it precisely as a site of inter-relation and relativisation. But he also configures it as the site of conflict between the abstract ideals or speculative principles which inform the artwork and their protracted interrogation. This conflict would define the dynamics of the artwork for Lawrence and also constitute its 'lasting value':

... every work of art adheres to some system of morality. But if it be really a work of art, it must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres. And hence the antinomy, hence the conflict necessary to every tragic conception.

The degree to which the system of morality, or the metaphysic, of any work of art is submitted to criticism within the work of art makes the lasting value and satisfaction of that work...

... it is the novelists and dramatists who have the hardest task in reconciling their metaphysic, their theory of being and knowing, with their living sense of being. Because a novel is a microcosm, and because man in viewing the universe must view it in the light of a theory, therefore every novel must have the background or the structural skeleton of some theory of being, some metaphysic. But the metaphysic must always subserve the artistic purpose beyond the artist's conscious aim. Otherwise the novel becomes a treatise.<sup>25</sup>

The 'microcosmic' or inter-relational form of the Lawrencean novel is simultaneously related and opposed to the microcosmic organisation of positive 'details' which is the product of Poundian *virtù*.

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24. For these objections to experimental fiction see especially 'Surgery for the Novel - or a Bomb', in *Phoenix*, pp. 517-520, p. 518; the quoted phrase is taken from 'Art and Morality', p. 525. This essay announces Lawrence's rejection of 'photographic' representation, which he considers to reproduce dominant ideas of the objective distance of 'mental-visual consciousness', against which he ranges demands for the changing interactions of the emotional, tactile and intuitive with the 'visual' in artistic representation (see also 'Introduction to These Paintings', p. 578, *Etruscan Places*, pp. 72-3, and also the dismissive presentation of Clifford Chatterley's 'modernist' writing in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, pp. 19-20). As already suggested, despite Lawrence's hostility to the anti-novelistic experiments of Joyce, it is perhaps a difference in emphasis that actually divides them. Where Joyce's experimentation with 'styles' in encyclopaedic and 'allotropic' conditions points up the 'relativity' of discourses as determining factors in subjectivity, Lawrence's conception of the novel posits the 'allotropy' or relativism of character, subjectivity or 'ego' within different contexts as the site of creative change and resistance to such determinism.

25. 'Study of Thomas Hardy', in *Phoenix*, pp. 398-516, p. 476 and p. 479.



For Lawrence the artwork must simultaneously incorporate and resist the abstract philosophy or ideals which inform and motivate it, and here can be seen an early formulation of the sort of dynamics of 'tragic' conflict and displacement that modern 'Art-speech' (*Studies*, p. 8) contains for him. What such 'speech' denotes is an aesthetic resistance to theory or 'dogma' which occurs for Lawrence, as for Pound, at the level of aesthetics and figurative language. The primacy of such language would be declared even in the context of the more 'programmatic' of Lawrence's prose works - the foreword to *Fantasia*, for example, declares of its own 'metaphysics' that '*This pseudo-philosophy of mine... is deduced from the novels and the poems, not the reverse*' (p. 15). Such 'speech' however is, like the novel itself, not promoted as a source of 'power' by Lawrence but as a medium that is 'incapable of the absolute'.<sup>26</sup> Like the 'relativistic' novel, art-speech is incapable of asserting itself as 'the only truth' (it is unable to abstract itself 'from that context by which and in which it exists as truth') and its very boundedness and imperfection serves to de-centre both the 'absolute' authority of the artist and the metaphysical grounds of the artwork, legitimising the dictum 'Never trust the artist. Trust the tale'.<sup>27</sup> Crucially, the 'antinomy' and 'conflict' which the artwork contains *eludes* the control of the Lawrencean artist, for while 'An artist... intellectualizes on top... his dark under-consciousness goes on contradicting him beneath' (*Studies*, p. 31).

Before following this disjunction between 'metaphysics' and 'art-speech' further it is necessary to consider aspects of this tension or conflict in the Lawrencean novel. The broad outlines of such a conflict can be seen to inhabit *The Rainbow*, where a 'theory of being' and its 'living' critique take the form of the emergence of the modern self over time. Lawrence opens the novel with a 'metaphysics' of the pre-modern, for his initial *milieu* is a semi-archaic rural and agricultural environment whose undifferentiated 'rhythms' the early narrative attempts to convey by submerging character in - or making it continuous with - a timeless landscape.<sup>28</sup> Over three generations the Brangwen family detach themselves from their own pre-history by way of emotional encounters and unions which describe ever 'widening circles' (a chapter title which occurs twice) away from this pre-modern centre. The emotional relationships of Ursula Brangwen dominate the latter half of the novel and serve to show a struggle to find the kind of 'self' which might achieve integrity within modernity. Her individuation, however,

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26. 'The Novel', in *A Selection from Phoenix*, pp. 161-74, p. 161.

27. Quotations are taken from *Studies*, p. 8, and 'Study of Thomas Hardy', p. 475.

28. 'Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil...' (*The Rainbow*, edited by John Worthen [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986], p. 42); thus the Brangwens appear only as abstract males and females, husbands and wives, in the novel's opening pages (pp. 43-5).

leaves her complex, frustrated and both selfless and self-conscious ('she was never herself, since she *had* no self', p. 382) and the historical poles of the novel's 'theories of being' remain in essential 'antinomy'.

The actual processes of this emergence are presented through movements in narrative language and dialogue in *The Rainbow* which articulate changing psychic states of character, and it is changes within and between characters, characters-in-relation and their 'narrative' environment which continue to mark the tensions and conflicts in the experience of modernity in the 'contemporary' setting of *Women in Love*. Such conflicts pervade this novel in even more complex ways, however. At one level the theme of *The Rainbow* continues (Ursula's memories of the 'intimate farm-life at Cossethay' enhance her present sense that 'she had no identity', *Women in Love*, pp. 481-2), but the Birkin-Ursula, Gerald-Gudrun pairings which provide the novel's foci allow a more extensive treatment of variations of emotional and sexual inter-relation. These pairings can be superficially broken down into an opposition between forms of relationship. On the one hand there exists the finally 'brutal and licentious' (p. 367) unrestraint and voluptuousness personified by Gerald Crich and Gudrun, which the novel judges to involve a regression into the sensual self, an 'individual darkness, sensation within the ego, the obscene religious mystery of ultimate reduction, the mystic frictional activities of diabolic reducing down...' (p. 550). On the other there exists Ursula and Rupert Birkin's search for something which will essentially escape the limitations of the sexual self by way of 'an eternal equilibrium in marriage' in which the self is transformed yet retains its integrity, if only you 'leave yourself separate, don't try to fuse' (p. 371).

The mark of approbation hovers over the non-frictional Birkin-Ursula relationship here, but elements of each 'pairing' contaminate the other in ways which present their inter-relations as a changing field of tensions.<sup>29</sup> The apparently individualist basis of the Birkin-Ursula partnership eventually becomes expressed as a desire to be 'both caught up and transcended into a new oneness where everything is silent' (p. 459). This desire for unity in silence can be seen as the narrative correlative of the overcoming of 'friction' for Lawrence. It promotes only 'frictional' dialogue, however, continuing a 'passion of opposition' (p. 186) within their relationship in which such desire becomes

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29. Such tension and complexity - as in *Kangaroo* - serves a critical purpose. *Women in Love* perhaps more than any other displays the tendency of the Lawrencean novel to 'contaminate' its own apparent oppositions and ideals by externalising and 'characterising' them - in decadent figures such as Hermione Roddice and Julius Halliday, for instance, who between them articulate conflicts between self-conscious knowledge and instinct (pp. 89-92), and 'visual' consciousness and feeling (p. 132).



translated into political debates upon questions of submission and mastery, collective living and self-sufficiency, emotional 'bullying' and freedom - debates which the novel leaves starkly unresolved.<sup>30</sup>

This theme would be taken up again in *Aaron's Rod*, where the vatic and vocal Rawdon Lilly desires 'the being together with someone else in silence, beyond speech' (p. 128). Such an ideal 'silence', as the narrator intrusively points out, might be available to Aaron as a musician, for as such he can achieve a 'wordless comprehension'. However, as the narrator has already made clear, 'He would speak in music. I speak with words' (p. 199), and the novel's 'metaphysic' of non-frictional silence ends in a chapter called 'Words' and 'a flood of words' (p. 344).

Significantly, Aaron's flute is destroyed by an anarchist's bomb as he is caught up in Italian political events in *Aaron's Rod*. This subservience of aesthetic self-sufficiency to political dialogue and 'friction' is even more pronounced in the aesthetic themes which *Women in Love* raises. The snow-bound close of the novel finds Ursula and Gudrun listening to the artist Loerke's description of his sculpture of a girl on a horse as 'a work of art' which 'has nothing to do with anything but itself, it has no relation with the everyday world... You *must not* confuse the relative work of action, with the absolute world of art' (pp. 525 -6). Contained in Ursula's counter-claim that the bronze horse appears 'stock and stupid and brutal' (p. 524) is an attack upon the imposition of human values upon the represented horse, an attack which finally becomes a denial of the autonomy of the artwork as upheld by Loerke and Gudrun: 'As for your world of art and your world of reality... you have to separate the two, because you can't bear to know what you are... The world of art is only the truth about the real world... but you are too far gone to see it' (p. 526).

Here Ursula echoes both Lawrence's discursive essays on the novel and his insistence - especially in poems concerning animals - upon the intractable 'otherness' of the animal in relation to the human world. Ursula had already criticised what she considered to be Gudrun's anthropomorphic approach to her environment,<sup>31</sup> but the debate with Loerke actually echoes an earlier discussion of submission and mastery initiated by Gerald's forcing of his mare against a moving train. Ursula's earlier objections to Gerald's 'domination' of the horse parallel her critique of Loerke's representation of the horse as 'an idea you have in *your* head' (p. 525), but Ursula's feeling itself veers close to a 'domineering'

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30. For a discussion of Ursula as a 'corrective' voice to the political and sexual metaphysics articulated by Birkin see chapter 3 of Peter Balbert's *D. H. Lawrence and the Phallic Imagination: Essays on Sexual Identity and Feminist Misreading* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989).

31. By reacting against Gudrun's mockery of the pathetic self-importance of a singing robin as a 'Little Lloyd George', Ursula would finally admire the whistling of the bird for its non-human and 'uncanny' qualities (*Women in Love*, pp. 342-3).

anthropomorphism, as Birkin recognises ('Nothing is so detestable as the maudlin attributing of human feelings and consciousness to animals', p. 201). The subtexts of this 'anthropomorphic' debate suggestively overspill into themes which encompass equally the legitimacy of Gerald Crich's domination of his own colliery labour-force and the viability of Birkin's subsequent assertion that 'It's the last, perhaps highest, love-impulse; resign your will to the higher being' (p. 202). But the main effect of these related 'aesthetic' passages is to destabilise both the artistic and political values which the text might be seen to uphold, for they come to inhabit only the inarticulate space *between* an aesthetics of maudlin sentiment and a doctrine of artistic mastery, an ethics of non-imposition and a politics of domination.

These movements of unresolved opposition can also be seen in Birkin's initial admiration of an African statue's embodiment of a 'Pure culture in sensation... *physical* consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual' (p. 133), and his later repudiation of its 'mystically sensual' appeal (p. 330). In the novel's system of 'north-south' cultural symbolism Birkin also denies the opposite of this 'primitivist' aesthetic - the northern 'ice-destructive knowledge' (p. 331) - that eventually 'crystalises' into the doomed setting of the final chapters. The novel finally leaves both Birkin and its own symbolic oppositions in a conflict whose resolutions lie only beyond the text. For such reasons, *Women in Love* has been seen as the most obviously relativised and 'dialogic' of Lawrence's fictions,<sup>32</sup> but working as it does so 'antagonistically' on so many levels, the actual stylistic dynamic of the novel must be conveyed in a much more aggressive term - the one that Lawrence considered apt being 'frictional':

In point of style, fault is often found with the continual, slightly modified repetition. The only answer is that it is natural to the author: and that every natural crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro, which works up to culmination. ('Foreword to *Women in Love*', p. 486)

Although his own 'totalising' impulses contradict it, such 'friction' is overt in and constitutive of the 'art-speech' of the Lawrencean novel at all narrative levels. There is a real sense in which the complex intransigence of 'frictional' opposition and self-problematisation in Lawrence's writing is itself *the* site of creativity, significance and meaning, for it is finally the 'struggle for verbal consciousness' ('Foreword', p. 486) and not any unequivocal emergence or accord which is significant in his work - Birkin and Ursula's relationship being ultimately 'fulfilled' not in unity but 'in difference' (*Women in Love*, p. 271). If Lawrence's programmatic thinking, like Pound's, can be seen to situate itself 'before

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32. See for instance David Lodge's 'Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin', in *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 57-74, where he suggests that 'In *Women in Love*... the reader is bounced, bewilderingly, exhilaratingly, from one subject position to another, and made to feel the force of each' (p. 65).



difference', then Lawrencean aesthetics differ from Pound's to the extent that 'art-speech' is itself the medium of difference.

What such considerations prompt is a reading of the Lawrencean artwork through thinkers whose relevance to Pound's aesthetics have been shown, but whose thought can now be given a different inflection. Lawrence had, for example, written of 'the conflict necessary to every tragic conception' when writing of the artwork, and this phrase finds its echo in aspects of Nietzschean thought which stress the *dialectical* nature of the aesthetic. In his early work on tragedy, for example, Nietzsche would configure the ecstatic and pre-rational energies of Dionysian myth as 'the playful construction and destruction of the individual world... the overflow of a primordial delight'. Such pre-'human' energy, however, was significant primarily in its relation to the opposed 'Apollinian' tendency towards a 'transfiguring illusion' of discrete and beautiful forms which kept 'the animated world of individuation alive'.<sup>33</sup> The simultaneously 'ecstatic' and terrifyingly vertiginous aspects of the Dionysian are evinced by the reserve and 'individuation' of the Apollinian, and at the same time the difference of the latter from the 'knowledge' which Socrates brought to bear upon art (and in so doing instigated the 'death' of the tragic) is ensured by the Dionysian. It is in the interaction of these categories that 'paradoxical pleasure' and a 'primal joy' emerges. 'True tragedy' for Nietzsche does not grant Aristotelian catharsis but a sense that 'life is... indestructibly powerful and pleasurable', for the 'chorus of satyrs' who live 'ineradicably... behind all civilization' allow a gaze 'right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature' and grant the Greek the tragic insight that 'Art saves him'.<sup>34</sup>

For Nietzsche the 'tragic' inheres, as it does in Lawrence, in a creative 'play' of opposition which co-exists in his writing with the outline of an aesthetics of pure 'affirmation'. The philosophical conception of the world as a play of opposed forces would be traced by Nietzsche to the pre-Socratic thought of Heraclitus, and Lawrence would cite this early thinker when describing the drive of his own poetry as a dynamic of identity and otherness:

"Homer was wrong in saying, 'Would that strife might pass away from among gods and men!' He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe; for, if his prayer were heard, all things would pass away - for in the tension of opposites all things have their being"<sup>35</sup>

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33. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* p. 142 and p. 99.

34. *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 59. On the 'play' of oppositions in Nietzsche and the sense of tragedy as affirmation see Foster, *Heirs to Dionysus*, pp. 52-66 and pp. 78-9.

35. From Lawrence's introduction to the 'Reptile' section of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* in *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 348. Nietzsche

As the introduction of the category of 'being' in the quotation above hints, aspects of Heidegger's thought can also be drawn upon to illustrate Lawrence's aesthetics. While in the context of Pound's writing the Heideggerian conception of art as that which 'founds' a world, or that through which the world 'emerges' was apposite, Lawrence's case allows the 'strife' that the Heideggerian artwork mediates - the 'strife' between that which is 'hidden' and that which is 'deconcealed' - to be stressed. In Heidegger's thinking, as in Nietzsche's, a dynamic 'tension of opposites' can be discerned when viewed through a Lawrencean context where a Poundian context disallowed or de-emphasised such 'conflict'.<sup>36</sup>

In Lawrence, moreover, 'art-speech' remains the ground of a Heideggerian 'strife' in that its language denotes a '*struggle* for verbal consciousness'. In the Heideggerian sense, language is both what is commonly 'at hand' and the medium in which we significantly 'dwell' - it is that in which the grounds of being are simultaneously 'hidden' and the site where they can be 'deconcealed'. As has been seen, such 'deconcealment' occurs in the *artwork* for Heidegger, but from the 'intimacy of the world' which the language of art reveals emerges not only a 'foundation' which the artwork grants but a 'difference' which bespeaks the 'presence' of being only as the reciprocal effect of its unavailability. In discussing the 'world' that emerges from the 'things' that a poem by Georg Trakl posits, for instance, Heidegger would imply that the (defamiliarised) language of poetry calls to 'a presence sheltered in absence'; 'Language speaks' within the poem, but 'It speaks by bidding the bidden, thing-world and world-thing, to come to the between of the dif-ference'.<sup>37</sup> What this 'dif-ference' or *différence* suggests is that poetic language does not unproblematically demarcate the ground of being but rather uncovers its dynamics and its limits - its tendency to recede from 'presence' into a 'sheltered absence' in an interplay which the artwork can only aspire to interrupt, not halt.

Such 'struggle', 'strife' and interruption can be seen to inform 'the conflict necessary to every tragic conception' that grounds the Lawrencean novel. At the level of language or 'art-speech' Lawrence participates in a Heideggerian push against the 'limits' of language, but one conducted not in a philosophical but an emotional register, for the artwork attempts '*the passionate struggle into conscious being*' ('Foreword', p. 486) that acknowledges the intimacy of language at the same time that it recognises the 'bounds' that it sets. Thus the 'passionate struggle' that Lawrencean language proposes

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follows the description of a Dionysian 'overflow of... primordial delight' with a reference to Heraclitus in *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 142.

36. Anne Fernihough stresses the dynamics of 'strife' which underlie the Heideggerian and Lawrencean artwork as well as showing a common source of the idea in Heraclitus, in *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 161-2.

37. Quotations are taken from 'Language' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 189-210, p. 199 and p. 206.



will aspire towards the 'perfection' of silence only as this silence is reciprocated by 'words', and will struggle for the realisation of non-frictional states only as language meets its own limits in the oppositional 'deconstructive turn' of the oxymoron ('Blood-consciousness', 'under-consciousness').<sup>38</sup>

What emerges from Lawrence's 'frictional' and suggestively sexualised formulation of the 'style' of *Women in Love* is a fundamental difference or antagonism between authorial doctrine and artistic practice. What this practice self-reflexively suggests is that this antagonism can be extended into an opposition between modernity and aesthetic experience *per se*. *Women in Love* hints at this through Gerald Crich's judgement that Birkin's admiration of the sensual African 'totem' was symptomatic of liking 'the wrong things... things against yourself' (p. 133), and it is significant that the impassioned embrace of any recognisable 'aesthetic' is usually synonymous with self-limitation in Lawrence's fiction.<sup>39</sup>

At both thematic and stylistic levels, then, there is an ambivalent interplay between the aesthetic and the 'lived' in Lawrence. It is ambivalent because for Lawrence 'art-speech' is simultaneously the site of a tragic unavailability or antagonism and the locus of a creative struggle 'into being' - as for Nietzsche, the Lawrencean 'tragic conception' becomes a mode of affirmation. For Lawrence as for Pound, an antagonistic or 'frictional' relation to art is symptomatic of a dissociation, one which Lawrence would announce in (Poundian) capitals: 'KNOWING and BEING are opposite, antagonistic states. The more you know, exactly, the less you *are*'. For Lawrence as for Pound *distance* from the artwork corresponds exactly to this depletion in 'being'. However, these states *remain* 'antagonistic states' for Lawrence, and while his metaphysics militate against dualism in all its forms (the dichotomy of the 'spirit' and the 'procreative body', the 'mental' and the pre-conscious) such 'conflict' remains a 'crucifixion' which provides the central dynamic of his thinking: 'This is the great cross of man, his dualism. The blood-self, and the nerve-brain self... The goal is to know how not to know'; 'We are divided within ourselves, against ourselves... that is the meaning of the cross symbol'.<sup>40</sup>

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38. I am indebted to Fiona Becket for bringing my attention to the function of oxymoron in Lawrence's work, as I am generally indebted to our discussions during the writing of her study 'Metaphor and Metaphysic: The Sense of Language in D. H. Lawrence' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1992). For a treatment of the oxymoron as a feature of Lawrence's poetry see Ginette Katz-Roy, 'The Process of "Rotary Image-Thought" in D. H. Lawrence's Last Poems', *Études Lawrenciennes*, 7 (1992), pp. 129-38, pp. 132-3. Gerald Doherty has outlined the idea of a 'deconstructive encounter' occurring in Lawrence's work from a different angle; see Gerald Doherty, 'White Mythologies: D. H. Lawrence and the Deconstructive Turn', *Criticism*, 29, 4 (Fall 1987), pp. 477-96, p. 477.

39. Perhaps the best known examples being Will Brangwen's love of the 'Gothic' in *The Rainbow* and Gudrun and Loerke's cold embrace of Futurism in *Women in Love*.

40. Quotations are taken from *Studies*, p. 121 and p. 90, and the phrases within parentheses from 'Introduction to these Paintings', p. 569.

One way in which Lawrence apparently resists such a 'tragic' impasse, antagonism or self-limitation in the artwork is through the theme of utopian change which often takes apocalyptic form (the 'end of the world' frightens Birkin in *Women in Love* only 'while it hangs imminent and doesn't fall, p. 113). Even his most extreme evocations of demise or nullity carry within them this potential or desire for radical change and renewal, as in the poem which takes its title - 'Phoenix' - from the mythic creature with which he is so frequently associated:

Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled,  
made nothing?  
Are you willing to be made nothing?  
dipped into oblivion?

If not, you will never really change. (*Complete Poems*, p. 728)

While apocalyptic impulses are common in Lawrence's writing, however, themes of 'oblivion' and even 'chaos' assert the promise of radical change only as they promote its *inconceivability*.<sup>41</sup> Considering the heavy-handed symbolism of this poem of 'rebirth' it is important to note that such 'symbolic' themes are staged in images whose basic point of reference is the insubstantiality or intangibility of their processes - as in the prolific 'rainbow' motif which acquires an ambiguous 'embodiment' only as it escapes conception:

Even the rainbow has a body  
made of the drizzling rain  
and is an architecture of glistening atoms  
built up, built up  
yet you can't lay your hand on it,  
nay, nor even your mind.<sup>42</sup>

'Like the rainbow', Lawrence would write, 'the vision perisheth',<sup>43</sup> and the tendency for him, even at his most apocalyptic or heavily 'symbolic', to shy away from images of fixity or 'realisation' in his writing, points up further patterns of tension in his work which are most easily analysed in his poetics.

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41. For Lawrence's assertion of an opposition between a 'chaos' that heralds renewed insight and the ossifications of convention see the introduction to '*Chariot of the Sun*, by Harry Crosby', in *Phoenix*, pp. 255-62, p. 256.

42. 'The Rainbow', *Complete Poems*, p. 692. 'Rainbow' (*ibid*, pp. 818-20) asserts the essentially relational form of this phenomenon and symbol (which 'can't put its feet together'), and it is a constant herald of change in *The Rainbow* itself. In one of his most notorious novellas, 'The Fox', Lawrence apparently endorses the murder of the 'nervous' Banford in order to realise the 'vital' pairing of March and the youth Henry. After the death/murder of Banford and the removal of her 'frictional' opposition to their relationship, however, the characters and narrative 'break-down' into an inarticulacy and inertia which cannot be taken as an 'endorsement' of the situation. The tale itself suggests the impasse that results from the 'resolution' of its own oppositions by utilising the rainbow symbol - 'the end of the rainbow is a bottomless gulf down which you can fall forever without arriving...' (see *The Complete Short Novels*, p. 203). For an analysis of the narrative 'breakdown' of this tale see Concepción Díez-Medrano's 'Women's Condition in D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fiction: A Study of Representative Narrative Processes in Selected Texts' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Warwick, 1993), chapter 3, part II.

43. From the introduction to '*Chariot of the Sun*', p. 429.



As has already been noted, Lawrence's poetry is often considered as a lyrical, autobiographical and confessional body of writing which stands closer to Romanticism than to the impersonal didacticism and formalism of High modernism.<sup>44</sup> Even if the mythopoeic and primitivist elements of Lawrence's poetry are considered characteristic of High modernist ideals, his poetics manage to avoid the charges of 'mastery' which modernism usually draws by the promotion of their own historical relativity and declared ephemerality:

... it has always seemed to me that a real thought, a single thought, not an argument, can exist only in verse, or in some poetic form. There is a didactic element about prose thoughts which makes them repellent, slightly bullying...

So I should wish these *Pansies* to be taken as thoughts... I should like them to be as fleeting as pansies, which wilt so soon, and are so fascinating with their varied faces...

... I offer a bunch of pansies, not a wreath of *immortelles*... A flower passes... The same with the pansy poems; merely the breath of the moment, and one eternal moment easily contradicting the next eternal moment.<sup>45</sup>

It should be noted that here Lawrence, like most modernists, associates the 'linearity' of prose with authority.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, however, he also aligns prose with violence ('a didactic element... slightly bullying') and de-emphasises what others would come to regard as its 'democratic' ethos (its 'dialogic' qualities) in relation to the 'monologism' of poetry. But Lawrence apparently inverts the Poundian ideals of the enduring 'assertion of a positive' in poetry here at the same time that he posits the 'real' and its artistic expression as a sequence of renewals rooted in contradiction and change. There is a double movement occurring here in which Lawrence can celebrate the ephemerality of art at the same time that this very ephemerality focuses aspects of its power. This is noticeable in the 1918 introduction 'Poetry of the Present' which insists that the poetic act should emerge 'from the midst of life' as neither a 'paean' of the past nor an 'exquisite' legacy for futurity; through such poetry Lawrence desires to achieve

... the poetry of that which is at hand: the immediate present. In the immediate present there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished...

Life, the ever-present, knows no finality, no finished crystallisation... we have partaken of the very substance of creative change, creative mutation...

... Give me nothing fixed, set, static. Don't give me the infinite or the eternal...<sup>47</sup>

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44. Lawrence would state that many of his poems were 'personal' and, taken together, constituted 'a biography of an emotional and inner life' (preface to *Collected Poems* in *Complete Poems*, pp. 27-9, p. 27).

45. 'Foreword to *Pansies*', in *Complete Poems*, pp. 423-4.

46. Fernihough makes this point in *Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, pp. 175-6.

47. 'Poetry of the Present', in *Complete Poems*, pp. 181-86, pp. 181-3. Lawrence compares the poetry of the past and future to the song of the nightingale and skylark at the opening of this introduction; he takes one of these analogies further by speaking against Keats' appropriation of the bird within an anthropomorphic 'paean' in 'The Nightingale' (see *Phoenix*, pp. 40-44); note also the description of Aaron's flute-playing as an 'entirely unaesthetic' sound, like a nightingale's song with 'no human emotion or passion or intention or meaning' in *Aaron's Rod*, p. 271.

In its very transience the poetry of the 'present' bears within it an injunction to 'live' in the 'Now' (p. 183), and in its eschewal both of the past and the 'eternal' it partakes of Nietzschean and Poundian impulses away from the disabling authority of history towards an intensity of life and art achieved in the spontaneity of the *immediate*. In Lawrence, as in Pound, a 'poetic' resistance to the authority of 'excess' signification in language becomes synonymous with a rupture with history, and the promise of such a rupture in the work of both writers can be traced to a common belief in the necessity of a history re-founded, at the expense of 'knowing', upon an immediate 'aesthetics' - as the city was founded not upon authority but upon *amor* for Pound, so 'The city is founded on a passionate unreason' for Lawrence.<sup>48</sup>

Lawrence's respective proximity to the metamorphic thinking of Pound, and distance from the allegorical poetics of Eliot can be seen clearly in his treatment of the idea of the poetic symbol. He would write of the 'true' symbol that it functions in a paradoxical relation of 'meaning against meaning', and would use the example of a 'superficial allegorical meaning', or that which authoritatively augments an already given structure of significance, as the didactic and 'usually moral' antithesis of the symbolic experience. The symbol, Lawrence writes, belongs to 'the sense-consciousness of the body and soul' and must ultimately be referred back to a primal creative relation between sensory experience and the articulation of a 'world' whose archetype is mythic. For Lawrence 'the images of myth are symbols. They don't "mean something". They stand for units of human *feeling*, human experience... the dynamic self, beyond comprehension'.<sup>49</sup> As in Pound's version of the mythic, Lawrencean myth denotes a unity which can be expressed most forcefully through the original non-difference of the *active* poetic or 'dynamic self' and the world which its 'figures' bring into being. 'Pagan thinkers', Lawrence writes in an echo of Pound and Fenollosa, 'were necessarily poets' and their images 'followed the logic of action rather than of reason' (*Apocalypse*, p. 54). Such 'activity' itself denies a conception of poetic language abstracted from the lived or *sensed* world. It insists, as it does in Pound, that its figurative transformations are 'rooted in the concrete'.<sup>50</sup>

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48. Foreword to *Collected Poems* in *Complete Poems*, pp. 849-52, p. 850. Lawrence is actually subverting the (misquoted) motto of his old University College Nottingham here - *Sapientiae Urbs Conditur*. The City is Built by Wisdom. The University, and disengagement from the moribund 'knowledge' that it offered, had figured large in Ursula's development in *The Rainbow*, see especially the thematic drawing together of the 'sterility' of academic life and the 'artificiality' of the modern city in chapter 15.

49. From the introduction to 'The Dragon of the Apocalypse, by Frederick Carter', *Phoenix*, pp. 292-303, pp. 295-6. In *Apocalypse* Lawrence would state that 'Allegory can always be explained... the true symbol defies all explanation, so does the true myth' (p. 115).

50. I take this phrase from Katz-Roy's discussion of the Lawrencean symbol in 'The Process of "Rotary Image-Thought"', p. 137.



For both Lawrence and Pound, then, an energised relationship between poetic language and the real marks the coincidence of art and the lived, and the sign of this incessant creativity lies in its resistance to the authoritative reifying powers of history: in *Apocalypse* Lawrence would declare, 'Fix the meaning of a symbol, and you have fallen into the commonplace of allegory', echoing Pound's contention that 'to use a symbol *with an ascribed or intended meaning* is, usually, to produce very bad art'.<sup>51</sup>

If Lawrence's contention that 'We can know the living world only symbolically' (*Etruscan Places*, p. 69) draws his thinking into the orbit of Poundian poetics, however, it is necessary to remember that the symbol itself, in Lacanian theory for example, must always exist as 'the murder of the thing'. The symbol carries *both* of these meanings for Lawrence, in that it is never 'metamorphic' in the Poundian sense - it does not evoke recurrent icons which imply the figural *realisation* of the aesthetic in the real; indeed, as has been noted, Lawrence derides the 'mental-visual consciousness' and desires instead a 'design' that can be recognised 'with your blood and your bones, as well as your eyes'.<sup>52</sup> Rather, Lawrence produces symbols of flux and change (the rainbow, the phoenix) which insist upon 'no finality, no finished crystallisation'. Even Lawrence's most mythopoeic poems suggest not the 'realisation' of their symbolism but its proximity to the 'oblivion' of the inconceivable - and primarily its relation to dissolution and death.<sup>53</sup> Here again the Lawrencean antagonism between 'metaphysic' and 'art-speech' must be upheld, and his simultaneous accord with and distance from a Poundian programme asserted. This can be seen clearly in Lawrence's approach to 'Poundian' themes which were also his own - sexuality and religion.

The religious impulse occurs for Lawrence upon the same ground as for Pound - as an experience in 'the *present* tense' and in the immediacy of the embodied:

Even the mind of God can only imagine  
those things that have become themselves:  
bodies and presences, here and now, creatures with a foothold in creation  
even if it is only a lobster on tip-toe.

Religion knows better than philosophy.  
Religion knows that Jesus was never Jesus  
till he was born from a womb, and ate soup and bread...  
with a body and with needs...

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51. See Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 60, and Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 86.

52. 'Art and Morality', p. 525. Birkin announces in *Women in Love* that 'one should *feel* things instead of merely looking at them... I'm sure life is all wrong because it has become much too visual' (p. 132).

53. See for instance 'Medlars and Sorb-Apples' (*Complete Poems*, p. 280), and Lawrence's late 'mythic' confrontations with the fact of death in poems like 'Bavarian Gentians' and 'The Ship of Death' (p. 697 and p. 716).

Let me never know myself apart from the living God!<sup>54</sup>

Experience of the divine in the 'present tense', however, remains a thematised problem in Lawrence's poetry. For him the significance of the divine cannot be recovered or expressed in an artistic tradition of the intertextual transmission of its 'energies' (which Pound relied upon in the case of the troubadours and other disseminators of the 'Luminous Detail'), but occurs rather in the problematics of a pattern of confrontations with the 'other' that define the modern self while incorporating, for example, the 'oppositional' intertext of the Bible:

Only man can fall from God  
Only Man.

No animal, no beast nor creeping thing...  
can slip entirely through the fingers of the hands of god  
into the abyss of self-knowledge,  
knowledge of the self-apart-from-god.

(*'Only Man'*, *Complete Poems*, p. 701)

The coincidence of self and god acts, like the animal, the 'foreigner' and the foreign environment or context as they feature in Lawrence's writing, as a desire for experience which inheres only in the dynamic 'tensions' of otherness.<sup>55</sup> The sensed incompleteness of self that such 'antagonistic' experience insists upon remains less pernicious than creative in Lawrence's thinking however. He would extrapolate this otherness to include the hypothetical singleness-of-self which modern thinking imputed to the 'primitive' or 'savage' and consider it as an inverted idealisation which functions both as a necessary antagonism in modern awareness and a futile yearning:

... the animals and savages are isolate, each one in its own pristine self. The animal lifts its head, sniffs, and knows within the dark, passionate belly.

We can't go back. we can't go back to the savages: not a stride. We can be in sympathy with them. We can take a great curve in their direction, onwards. But we cannot turn the current of life backwards... (*Studies*, p. 36 and p. 145)

As for the reality of the 'primitive' experience, modernity inherits a haunting 'distance' from it, being left, for instance, with merely historical evidence - as is the case with the character of the Etruscans filtered through Roman prejudice - or the inefficacy of 'pale-faced authority' and idealism in its confrontations with residual authenticities.<sup>56</sup>

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54. Quotations are taken from 'The Hands of God' and 'Demiurge' in *Complete Poems*, p. 699 and p. 689.

55. Marjorie Perloff has written of his treatments of this theme in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* that the 'otherness' of the animal and vegetable worlds in Lawrence 'remain stubbornly other' ('Lawrence's Lyric Theatre: *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*', in *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990], pp. 99-117, p. 109); for an appraisal of the function of otherness in Lawrence's 'animal' poems in existentialist terms see Gilbert, *Acts of Attention*, chapters 7 and 8.

56. These themes are treated in the poems 'Cypresses' and 'The Revolutionary' respectively; see *Complete Poems*, p. 297 and p. 287 (Lawrence's views on the fall of the Etruscans in the face of Roman authority and also his idea that the



Similar 'ghosts' haunt modern sexuality, and while being the place where 'we have our basic, most elemental being' (*Fantasia and Psychoanalysis*, p. 185) it is also the site where antagonism is most evident. It can be imaged, for instance, in terms of a polarisation in which the 'magic and the dynamism rests on *otherness*', and the failure of 'the mystery of the recognition of *otherness*' can be judged as a failure to appreciate the *resistance* of the other to appropriation by a self which yearns for a perverse or domineering identification with all that is not-self. Such identification constitutes, for Lawrence, a facile refusal of the tensions and oppositions which characterise the real, and the complexities of this position were exactly what were approached in *Women in Love*'s treatment of anthropomorphic aesthetics.<sup>57</sup> Lawrence's poetry, in many ways, can be seen to make explicit some of the more integral problems which drive his fiction, and just as *Women in Love*'s raising of the desire for a 'new oneness where everything is silent' is undercut by the narrative's own frictional 'crucifixion' into the dialogue of 'art-speech', so Lawrence's animal poems would explore sexuality as a 'crucifixion' into a similarly tragic individuation and articulacy - as the scream emerging during the copulation of tortoises in 'Tortoise Shout' attests:

Why were we crucified into sex?

The cross,

The wheel on which our silence first is broken,

Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability,

our deep silence,

Tearing a cry from us.

(*Complete Poems*, p. 364 and p. 366)

The 'crucifixion' of sexuality is analogous with the fall 'into the abyss of self-knowledge' which gives rise to the experience of the other. Both are inevitable and both are analogous with the 'tragic' and antagonistic experience of the 'otherness' of art, for Lawrence would judge the belief in the aesthetic as a realm of redemption as a crucifixion itself which, like sexuality, actually occurred as 'a great cry of loneliness'.<sup>58</sup>

Despite Lawrence's valorisation of the primitive symbol, then, his writing actually pulls against the sort of unities and totalities that it suggests, while militating against the lure of the aesthetic generally.

In *The Rainbow*, for instance, images such as the arch, the doorway and the rainbow itself imply both

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authentic experience of myth is prehistoric and pre-Greek - he considers Greek myth to be merely 'the decadence of a previous cosmic religion' - can be found in *Etruscan Places*, p. 74, p. 76 and p. 66).

57. Quotations are taken from *Fantasia and Psychoanalysis*, p. 103, and *Studies*, p. 82. Succinct treatments of sexuality as an experience of otherness occur in many poems in *Look! We Have Come Through!* (as stated in the 'Argument' of the volume [*Complete Poems*, p. 191]; see also M. J. Lockwood's discussion of this theme in chapter 2 of *A Study of the Poems of D. H. Lawrence: Thinking in Poetry* [Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987]).

58. 'From The Crown', in *A Selection from Phoenix*, pp. 433-442, p. 434.



movement away from the past and the search for a renewed sense of ontological 'connection' in the present. One of the book's other movements, however, is *against* the false promise of any such 'reconnection' latent in the modern symbol or aesthetic. Thus Anna Brangwen will resist 'the power' of 'tradition' enshrined in the Christian icon of the lamb (p. 200), and will interrupt her husband's 'passionate' enjoyment of the majesty of a cathedral by forcing it into an 'inter-relatedness' which uncovers its limitation:

She was spoiling his passionate intercourse with the cathedral...

... That which had been his absolute, containing all heaven and earth, was become to him as to her, a shapely heap of dead matter...

... he realised the doorway was no doorway...

... He thought of the ruins of the Grecian worship, and it seemed, a temple was never perfectly a temple, till it was ruined and mixed up with the winds and the sky and the herbs.

He still loved the church. As a symbol, he loved it. he tended it for what it tried to represent. (pp. 247-8)

The eclipse of the symbol, or its fall into 'representation', is an intrinsic feature of *The Rainbow's* treatment of the advent of modernity, and the novel will go on to call its own symbolism to account in the final chapter. Although Ursula contemplates a grey industrial world from her window as a 'corruption spreading over the face of the land', her concluding vision is of a 'rainbow' in which she sees 'the earth's new architecture... built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven' (*Rainbow*, p. 548). The symbolic function of this vulnerably utopian closure is highlighted by being preceded, a few pages earlier, by Ursula's symbolically charged and threatening encounter with horses in a field (pp. 539-42). The critical approaches to this closing symbolism have necessarily been as inconclusive as the certainty of any distinction made between the horses' 'objective' existence or their function as externalisations of Ursula's psyche.<sup>59</sup> What is conclusive is the importance of the horse for Lawrence as an image of the *unavailability* of symbolism for modernity. In *Women in Love* it figures as the focus of unresolved aesthetic and political questions, and elsewhere it is discussed as a 'dominant symbol... of potency' and action, which 'Within the last fifty years man has lost', or presented as subliminal evidence of 'some arrest in the deepest psychic activity'.<sup>60</sup> The problematics of the horse as symbol can be extended to the novel's own 'symbolic' closure, which, occurring as it does

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59. F. R. Leavis considered the novel's final assertion of a utopian symbol to constitute 'an implicit criticism of *The Rainbow* by Lawrence himself, motivated in part by the contradictions that the writing of the novel had unearthed (*D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, pp. 169-70); H. M. Daleski, by contrast, considers the horses to present a 'symbolic retrospect' of Ursula's emotional journey and sees in the rainbow a symbol of 'wholeness' (*The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* [London: Faber and Faber, 1965], pp. 123-4). The idea that the horses constitute a psychic and specifically 'projective' symbolism which exists as a contrast to the 'ontological continuity' of the initial environment of *The Rainbow* is treated by Bell in *Language and Being*, see especially p. 86 and p. 93.

60. See *Apocalypse*, p. 61, and *Fantasia and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 170-71.



in an atmosphere antagonistic to 'true' symbolism draws attention to the artifice of its own sudden recourse to the rainbow as a symbol of openness and promise.

While Lawrence's writing often invokes archaic forms of 'aesthetic' unity it constantly 'gives the lie to this completed symbol' ('Study of Thomas Hardy', p. 475) as it occurs in modern art and in its *own* aesthetics. Art becomes the place where any authorial 'metaphysics' of unity and singleness are tried and fractured, indeed, art becomes an arena where *antagonism itself* is the spectacle. In *Mornings in Mexico* this was presented as a recognition of the 'otherness' of native Indian rituals and dances in which differentiations between self and god, art, artist and audience have, Lawrence suggests, never held:

Drama, we are told, has developed out of these ceremonial dances. Greek drama arose this way.

But from the Indian's ceremonial dance to the Greek's early religious ceremony is still a long step. The Greeks usually had some specified deity, some particular god to whom the ceremony was offered. And this god is the witness, the essential audience of the play. The ceremony is *performed* for the gratification of the god. And here you have the beginning of the theatre, with players and audience.

With the Indians it is different. There is strictly no god. The Indian does not consider himself as created, and therefore external to God, or the creature of God. To the Indian there is no conception of a defined God. Creation is a great flood, forever flowing, in lovely and terrible waves...

There is, in our sense of the word, no God. But all is godly. There is no Great Mind directing the universe. Yet the mystery of creation, the wonder and fascination of creation shimmers in every leaf and stone, in every thorn and bud, in the fangs of the rattlesnake, and in the soft eyes of a fawn. Things purely opposite are still pure wonder of creation...

There is no division between actor and audience. It is all one.

There is no God looking on. The only god there is, is involved all the time in the dramatic wonder and inconsistency of creation. God is immersed, as it were, in creation, not to be separated or distinguished. There can be no Ideal God.<sup>61</sup>

While Lawrence's awe in witnessing such 'singleness of being' is evident, a condition in which such unity might be realised (in which 'There is no spectacle, no spectator', p. 91), and evaluation of the 'artwork' would be meaningless (because 'there is nothing outside it, to judge it', p. 99) cannot occur, for Lawrence's thinking compulsively returns, full-circle, to the fact of antagonism: 'we can understand the consciousness of the Indian only in terms of the death of our consciousness' (p. 88).

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61. *Mornings in Mexico* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: William Heinemann, 1927), pp. 96-7 and p. 98. Wyndham Lewis would characterise modern revolutionary ideals in terms of a similar disappearance of the categories of art and audience: 'Should there be "players" and "livers," art and life, or only one thing? That is one way of putting the matter...' (*The Art of Being Ruled*, p. 174), and Hewitt notes that the 'theatre' model also served as an analogue of the double distancing of the electorate from power in anti-democratic thinking - the mark of power's mere 'representation' (see *Fascist Modernism*, pp. 170-71).



## ***The Plumed Serpent: Art on the Edge of Failure***

Art, and its thematic appearance in Lawrence, constitutes a confrontation with aspects of 'otherness', and to experience it in the position of mere 'spectators' or 'judges' is inevitable - indeed, it becomes destructive if this 'specular' (indirect, mediate) and judgemental positioning is resisted. Thus the aesthetic comes to exist both as the site of a desire for an unattainable completeness and a place where a creative 'tension of opposites' is actually realised. This thinking remains central even to Lawrence's most notoriously 'primitivist' and 'authoritarian' novel, *The Plumed Serpent*.

Criticism generally insists that the intent of *The Plumed Serpent* is to heal rifts - of antagonism, otherness and difference - that Lawrence's writing seems unable to escape.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the ambivalence of the stand that the novel takes against them remains evident in the fact that such rifts - of which a major symptom is the breakdown of the novel-form itself - are definitive features of this work. Within it modern Mexico becomes the site of the reversal of modernity, for the object of the 'new' religion promoted by the anthropologist Don Ramón and the (semi-autobiographical) General Cipriano is to 'make a new connection between the people and God'. In challenging an imperialist Catholicism and reinvoking Quetzalcoatl, the ancient god of the Toltecs, these character's attempt, from unashamedly modern bases of knowledge and the organisation of power, to programmatically overcome the 'crucifixion' of modernity. Quetzalcoatl is 'dead' but 'unrelinquished' according to its acolytes, and the 'reconnection' offered by this reversal of history will ensure that 'blood' ceases to 'beat in the abstract'. Only god made 'manifest', and not the idealistic remedies offered by modern civilisation, can re-start 'the pulse of the life' for the dispossessed and dominated Mexicans; as Ramón insists,

... without a religion that will connect them with the universe, they will all perish. Only religion will serve; not socialism, nor education, nor anything.<sup>63</sup>

Ramón asserts that 'The past is finished. It is the new twilight' (p. 365), and the transformation of the men into gods takes place after the 'clearance' of a metamorphic ground which has 'The flaminess and the magnificence of the beginning' (p. 428) and partakes of the 'Now, and forever Now' (p. 212).

Lawrence's writings on poetics and their ideal 'escape' from disabling histories and reified meanings

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62. Doherty, for instance, considers Lawrence's 'leadership novels' in general as an 'endeavour to liquidate difference in their repeated gesturing towards a transcendental site "outside" the text' ('White Mythologies', p. 493).

63. Quotations are taken from *The Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl)*, edited by Ronald G. Walker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 202, p. 263, p. 309 and p. 300. The phrase 'pulse of the life' is taken from 'America, Listen to Your Own', in *Phoenix*, pp. 87-91, where Lawrence writes: 'Americans must take up life where the Red Indian, the Aztec, the Maya, the Incas left it off. They must pick up the life-thread where the mysterious Red race let it fall. They must catch the pulse of the life which Cortés and Columbus murdered' (p. 90).



are evoked here, but the poetic elements of the work itself, or the popular 'hymns' of Quetzalcoatl which contain 'the voice of a master and authority' (p. 297), paradoxically draw upon traditional sources while existing, implicitly, in putative 'translations' from the Spanish.<sup>64</sup> The status of the text thus serves to distance the reader from and conventionalise the sense of the 'forever Now'. Similarly the 'simple' artefacts produced by Ramón's own workshops, and the 'primitive' ritual dances remain either vulnerably romantic or mere 'ancient echoes' of a 'primeval world' (p. 370) whose significance lies beyond the power of the narrative to convey. The only way to approach aesthetic 'immediacy', the setting intimates, is through an imagined sympathy with a condition in which such hymns, rituals and artifacts might *not* be either so fixedly nostalgic or 'other'.

While *The Plumed Serpent* treats the re-realisation of the 'mythic' sensibility in a context where a colonial history and modernisation have spectacularly failed, the distance between this 'vital' ideal and the novel's own authoritative, rhetorical or *willed* insistence upon this re-connection is thematically apparent:

'... it is always darkest before the dawn. We must make the miracle come. The miracle is superior even to the moment of coition.'

It seemed, however, as if he said it by an effort of will.<sup>65</sup>

The narrative will attempt to dissipate the coercion of the 'willed' and the 'forced' by recourse to the affirmative ideal of desire or the '*Wish*' (p. 426), but this assailable opposition suggests that the work is actively 'daring' a scepticism or an act of judgement which might shatter its own metaphysical grounds. The submissiveness which poses as empowerment in the character of Teresa, Ramón's eventual 'spiritual' bride, brings such a 'dare' to the foreground, for when the protagonist Kate Leslie suggests that Teresa's relationship to the god-like Ramón is one of sheer self-sacrifice Teresa denies it by insisting that 'you must not touch me there, and judge me' (p. 445).

However, the most radical way in which such judgement is dramatised, or the 'work of art submitted to criticism' in *The Plumed Serpent*, is through the character of Kate Leslie. She is the locus of an 'allotropic' ambivalence well established in the female Lawrencean character, and as a visitor to Mexico whose 'Irish spirit' was 'weary to death of definite meanings and a God of one fixed purport' (p. 91) she is simultaneously the embodiment of a feminised receptivity and a sceptical European

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64. As Gilbert has pointed out, the hymns are drawn from 'traditional, highly structured religious sources - Methodist and Mexican hymns, Biblical psalms and prophecies' (*Acts of Attention*, p. 242).

65. *Plumed Serpent*, p. 99. This thematised disjunction between realisation and rhetoric is suggested as the 'principle' of the novel by Pinkney (*D. H. Lawrence*, p. 155), and is treated by Bell as the self-conscious 'mirror-image' of a novel like *The Rainbow*, for where 'metaphysic' and narrative language are indissociable in the earlier novel *The Plumed Serpent* makes a 'conscious project' of its theory of being (*Language and Being*, p. 178).



resistance to the 'miracle' of Quetzalcoatl. The narrative often images Mexico as a receptive female body (a hymn sees 'Mexico lying like a dark woman with white breast-tips', p. 278) but Kate continues to perceive her Mexican environment 'as a doom' (p. 56) or experience its significance primarily in terms of distance and otherness - as in her contemplation of a native boatman whose eyes take 'the peculiar gleaming far-awayness, suspended between the realities', which she realises 'was the central look in the native eyes' (p. 125).

The new innocence that emerges as the ground of *The Plumed Serpent's* metaphysics eventually finds Kate realising a 'positive passivity', and admiring her 'sacred' partner Cipriano for avoiding 'the curious irritant quality of talk' (p. 458). Cipriano's silence is the mark of an impersonal, physical and phallic power ('Man is a column of blood, with a voice in it' Ramón decrees, 'And when the voice is still... he is better', p. 443), and, as ever, such silence marks the negation of the 'frictional'. For Kate this silence itself evokes the 'friction' of her own, now apparently transcended, sexual history:

Curious as it may seem, he made her aware of her own old desire for frictional, irritant sensation. She realised how all her old love had been frictional, charged with the fire of irritation and the spasms of frictional voluptuousness...

She realised, almost with wonder, the death in her of the Aphrodite of the foam: the seething, frictional, ecstatic Aphrodite. By a swift dark instinct, Cipriano drew away from this in her. (pp. 458-9)

This death or 'silencing' of Aphrodite signifies on a number of interrelated levels. It renounces the (Poundian) veneration of eroticised visual art which underpins a European canon of the 'beautiful' (Lawrence would distance himself from Pound early in his career by suggesting that 'his god is beauty, mine, life')<sup>66</sup> The novel's urge to transcend 'seeing' is indissociable from the ideal of silence, and Kate's respect for Ramón and Cipriano issues towards their overcoming of the desire of the eye: 'Let me close my prying, *seeing* eyes... They have got rid of that itching of the eye, and the desire that works through the eye' (p. 221). The death of Aphrodite thus signals the dissolution of the old self within a new-found non-frictional sexuality. 'A man and a woman' in a transformed 'togetherness' remain fundamental as 'the clue to all present living and future possibility' in *The Plumed Serpent* (p. 435), and here Lawrence might be dramatising ideas formulated in 1914:

I think the only re-sourcing of art, revivifying it, is to make it more the joint work of man and woman... Because the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two... (*Letters*, p. 280)

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66. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, volume 1, edited by James T. Boulton (Cambridge, London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 145.



What is reiterated on many levels in *The Plumed Serpent* is that the 're-sourcing' of art can be regarded as *identical* with what Lawrence had earlier configured as 'the deep, unfathomable free submission' (*Aaron's Rod*, p. 346) that transcends 'friction' in political and sexual relationships. The aesthetic or mythic as it exists in *The Plumed Serpent* must then emerge from but transcend an 'antagonistically' defined space. It must be neither the archaic symbol which 'frictionally' reappears 'in the weary script of socialism and anarchy', which is the condition in which the narrative finds modern art in Mexico (p. 84), nor the 'frictional' beauty of art symbolised by the Botticellian 'Aphrodite of the foam'. If an authentic aesthetic 're-source' can be found, then the space it inhabits will resolve the 'frictional' problems of power and mastery which are synonymous with the categories of the personal and the sexual for Lawrence.

The entire narrative of *The Plumed Serpent*, however, can be seen to be framed by Kate's sceptical resistance to such an aesthetic re-source, and this takes the form of her constant denial of non-difference between the 'artwork' of Quetzalcoatl and her position as its 'audience'. The power of the 'mystery' is undercut precisely by Kate's critical distance from it, and she is forced, as Lawrence was when confronting the Indian dance in *Mornings in Mexico*, to remain 'outside it, to judge it', and by being a 'spectator' derogate it to the status of a representation and spectacle.

The bull-fight which opens the novel, and which Kate unwillingly attends and finds obscene, raises starkly the idea of a critical and negative distance between spectacle and spectator. It also introduces elements of absurdity, limit and coercion into both categories, for 'Kate felt she was going to prison' (p. 40) when she entered the arena, and the horses which the picadors rode were similarly constrained by being 'blindfolded with a black cloth' (p. 47). The imperative for such a spectacle to subsume (or delimit) its audience if such negativities are to be overcome continues to echo through the novel, and as the 'manifestation' of the gods of Quetzalcoatl progresses this imperative becomes more urgent. Cipriano presents his deification as a 'challenge' (p. 355) to Kate's disbelief, and Ramón suggests that while the rites of Quetzalcoatl exist as a 'monkey-show' to some observers, the elimination of this audience might become a necessity, as 'Monkeys always end by being horrid to the spectators' (p. 292).

The imperative to elide the distinction between artwork and audience works both ways, however, and Kate observes that Mexico itself might be malevolently 'sharpening the machete to stick in



Ramón's heart', for 'The real perfect moment was when the hero was downed'.<sup>67</sup> What remains crucial to the realisation of the 'mystery', then, is the overcoming of this difference in unqualified identification or collaboration:

'I *am* the living Huitzilopochtli,' he said. 'When Ramón dares to be the living Quetzalcoatl, I dare to be the living Huitzilopochtli. I *am* he. - Am I not?' (p. 359)

Alone she was nothing. Only as the pure female corresponding to his pure male did she signify...

... She was not real till she was reciprocal. (p. 423)

'I am Huitzilopochtli: but I cannot be it alone...'

Kate wrapped herself in a dark tartan shawl and went with him. (p. 426)

What persists through Kate's specular relation to the rites of Quetzalcoatl, however, is the proximity of theophany and deification to the coercive and the ludicrous. To their desire to configure her as the goddess Malintzi she insists that 'I am only Kate, and I am only a woman. I mistrust all that other stuff'; 'I am sick of these men putting names over me' (p. 407). Similarly ambiguous is her response to the dramatic night of Huitzilopochtli:

... she heard the drums on the towers, and the sound of rockets... in the night sky, hung a spangling cloud of red and blue fire, the colours of Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl. The night of Huitzilopochtli would be over. The sky was dark again, and there were all the stars, beyond, far, far beyond where the spangling had been. (p. 425)

Here Kate can be seen to identify the 'living gods' with the permanence and mystery of the stars or be comparing men, who so often 'seemed nothing but men' (p. 422), with the depthless 'spangling' of the celebratory fireworks.<sup>68</sup>

Alongside the exploration of the possibility of the 'complete symbol' that *The Plumed Serpent* conducts, then, goes a sustained critique of its spectacular authoritarianism. Kate's ability to legitimise the 'new' religion by transcending her critical position as spectator - 'He is of the gods, and so am I. Why should I judge him!' (p. 429) - is balanced by the sense of her own duplicity which appears,

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67. *Plumed Serpent*, p. 440. *Aaron's Rod* also plays with this idea in complex and unresolved ways. When Aaron and two upper-class acquaintances travel on an Italian train the moneyed pair 'impress' and delight their fellow-travellers in a way that, Aaron reflects, causes ultimate resentment: 'Mankind... almost forces those whom it can force to play a role and to make an impression. And afterwards, never forgives' (p. 240). This is borne out when somebody takes Aaron's seat and one of the friends confront him. The occupier, however, looked his accuser 'not in the eyes, but between the brows, and sneered full in his face' (p. 242). This confrontation reverberates in the work's later discussion of innate 'superiority' and 'inferiority' which is illustrated by Lilly's claim that 'It is written between a man's brows, which he is' (p. 327). The sneering refusal of the man to give back Aaron his third-class seat tends to raise more questions about the 'bullying' resentment that fuels such confrontations than help clarify any sense of the equity or 'innate superiority' of the man's refusal to submit.

68. As the living Malintzi or Marina, the native who was both translator and mistress to Cortes, Kate exists ambiguously as *either* the archetypal 'betrayal' of the Mexican people or a sign of the novel's account of 'the systematic reversal' of this process (see Bell, *Language and Being*, p. 185). The firework as a metaphor of male sexual arrogance would occur again in Lady Chatterley's description of men who 'just went off from the top of their heads as if they were squibs, and expected you to be carried heavenwards along with their own thin sticks' (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p. 55).



italicised, even in the novel's final paragraphs - '*What a fraud I am! ... But I can fool them so that they shan't find out*' (p. 481). Such hesitation astutely summarises the dynamics of *The Plumed Serpent*, for it must recognise equally aspects of the coercive imposition that its projective religion requires, and the tragedy - that is also a dynamic necessity - of an existence divorced from the ideal 'singleness' of being which its metaphysics demand. It is the ambiguity of Kate's role as spectator which finally frames the novel and undercuts the authority of this metaphysic however. Just as her entry into the arena at the opening of the novel causes her to feel 'she was going to prison', so her final words to Cipriano ambivalently signal *either* relief or imprisonment within the arena of the 'artwork' whose creation she has witnessed - 'You won't let me go!' (p. 482).

The final lines of *The Plumed Serpent* refer to its inability to transform its authority into an enabling and positive power. Its aesthetic ideals are identical with this power, and the sustained antagonism of its art-speech ensures that 'friction' rather than affirmation is the dominant characteristic of the novel. Such is true of Lawrence's work and thinking generally, for it is the critical and sceptical power of the aesthetic, and not its authority, which his writing constantly returns to. 'Positive' power, like a non-spectacular and non-antagonistic art, remains essentially 'unknowable' within Lawrencean modernism, for as he had written elsewhere, 'Power is beyond us. Either it is given us from the unknown, or we have not got it' ('Blessed are the Powerful', p. 512). Like the stars 'far, far beyond' the fireworks of the gods made manifest, power is that which emerges only by contrast as the artwork flares and fades.

While Lawrence desires to outline an aesthetic which will overcome a 'vile' Platonic 'crucifixion' (or 'split') which a derogated art has 'humbly and honestly served... through three thousand years' ('Introduction to These Paintings', p. 569), 'crucifixion' itself becomes a central theme of the Lawrencean artwork. The empowered silence of the 'unknown' and the 'beyond' remains that which Lawrence's language can only violate as it paradoxically charts a '*passionate struggle into conscious being*' against its own ideals of silence and the pre-conscious. The 'tension of opposites' and not their synthesis thus describe the place where 'all things have their being' in Lawrence's aesthetics, and the aesthetic itself remains the site where these tensions are tellingly staged.

## In Conclusion

This study has treated the ways in which an empowered art and aesthetics are defined through an antagonism to authority in Pound's modernist programme, and shown that his 'positive' art sought to recover a radical alternative to authority itself. At almost every point in this programme Pound substitutes the principle of art, artifice and *artifex* for the function of authority, and establishes a circularity between the apparently opposed categories of *auctoritas* and artifice that constantly repels the label 'authoritarian'. The de-authorising drives of Pound's aesthetics are clarified by a contrast with the project of T. S. Eliot, for Eliot's writing had promoted itself, in various ways, as a renunciation of the power of art. Specifically, such 'power' was presented as an undesired artifice in the draft of *The Waste Land*, and a markedly Poundian aesthetics given as that which must humble itself in the face of a prior authority. In his role as editor of the poem Pound managed to deflect Eliot from this project of re-authorisation, as readings of the scars of the published poem's 'Caesarean Operation' attest.

In the re-aligned scope of the aesthetic, as it emerged in the writing of Joyce, literature became the arena where crises in discourse were staged rather than resolved. Aesthetics posited themselves as a category which could be broken down into the multiplicity of the everyday, and not a force which towered potently above the 'bitched mess of modernity' as Pound conceived it. Thus the aesthetics of *Ulysses* instigated a series of affirmations which occurred at levels that Poundian aesthetics refused to fathom. Further, *Ulysses* promoted a reverse-reading of its own aesthetic authority which was both textually and auto-biographically oriented, embedding the artist and artwork in a matrix of engagements and self-reflections which were anathema to the Poundian conception of art as 'the assertion of a positive'.

If Joyce's work helped reveal the narrow and pathologically un-self-reflective limits of Pound's project, then Lawrence presented a related aesthetics of irreconciliation. Michael North has suggested



that the general historical and political project of aesthetics can be seen as 'The attempt to rejoin subject and object, individual and community, fact and value',<sup>1</sup> but such categorical reconciliations relate to the projects of Lawrence and Joyce only insofar as they remain indistinct or dialogised in their writing. Lawrence was shown to be important in any comparative analysis of Pound's writing because he too sought an empowered culture whose shape could be sought through the domain of aesthetics. Despite similarities between Pound and Lawrence's programmatic modernism, however, Lawrencean aesthetics were shown to be 'positive' only as they remained intrinsically antagonistic. Lawrence's treatment of the artwork, like that of novelistic character, suggested dissolution within relation; his treatment of politics emphasised its recurrent exhaustion and 'breakdown'; his approach to symbol and myth constantly highlighted their unavailability. Although 'reconciliation' might provide the impulse of Lawrence's metaphysics the dynamic of his writing emerged as an affirmative attrition, and the authoritative assertion of a metaphysic repeatedly turned the Lawrencean aesthetic into a site of incompleteness and conflict.

As has been suggested, the major failure of Pound's aesthetics of de-authorisation was their unwillingness to reflect their de-authorising impulse back upon themselves. The distance of Poundian aesthetics from a self-reflexivity that is axiomatic for writers like Joyce and Lawrence can be reiterated by re-capping Pound's poetic project. Paradoxically, this can be achieved by moving *forward* into the history of *The Cantos*, for, like Joyce's *oeuvre*, they encourage their own re-reading; the motivation behind such re-reading in Pound's case, however, is to uphold the autocratic *virtù* of the artist and artwork.

If Pound was ever to be impelled into self-reflection it should be evident in *The Pisan Cantos*. They were written between May and November 1945 while he was imprisoned north of Pisa in the U. S. Detention Training Centre - for much of the time in solitude and in a high security 'cage' - on charges of treason for his broadcasts over Rome Radio. The extreme conditions of this sequence's composition dictate that here *The Cantos*' 'presentative' and 'affirmative' methods of intertextual transcription and historical production (as begun in the Malatesta cantos and continued markedly through the Jefferson, China and Adams' cantos) temporarily halt. What supervenes is a writing characterised by personal,

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1. See North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound*, p. 15; as North points out, Terry Eagleton suggests a similarly reconciliatory function for the aesthetic in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford and Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 25.

lyrical, and introspective elements which introduce distinctly emotional co-ordinates into the work's organisation.<sup>2</sup>

In Pisa *The Cantos*, like history itself for Pound, lose their sense of progression. With the death of Mussolini and the 'dream' of Italian fascism there could now be only a strained coincidence between the aesthetic and the 'real', as the personification of the man of *virtù* and the political order he promised had been removed from the stage of history.<sup>3</sup> The first canto of the Pisan sequence opens,

The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders  
Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,  
Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano*  
by the heels at Milano... (*Cantos*, p. 425)

- and several lines later the canto produces the visionary city of cantos IV and V in what appears to be a lament of its own failed aesthetic project 'To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars'.

But this tragic 'failure' is ambiguous from the beginning. The comparison of Mussolini with both Manes, the Persian sage who founded the Manichean sect and was crucified for his heresy, and three lines later with Dionysus, lends to him the attributes of both a persecuted seer and a god. The Manicheans were victimised in the same crusades which obliterated Provençal culture, but the fact that Pound had constantly asserted the *persistence* of this cultural energy suggests that the death of Mussolini might be regarded as just another instance of the violent suppression of ineluctable and recurrent forces.<sup>4</sup> Rather than signalling the 'end' of the vision, the death of Mussolini becomes, like the eradication of the troubadours, both a tragedy and 'a problem of history' (*Cantos*, p. 429) of a type that Pound was used to dealing with.

Such historically determined 'introspection' would not signal the collapse of Pound's modernist programme, then, but instigate a radical return to origins. Reiterating the opening of *The Cantos* proper, an identification with the questing Odysseus ('Odysseus / the name of my family', p. 425) marks the Pisan sequence as a return to a beginning that includes both a tragic instability of identity ('"I am noman, my name is noman"', p. 426) and the start of another Odyssean journey into 'luminous'

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2. Bacigalupo recognises the emotional complexity of *The Cantos* at this point when he writes of the Pisan sequence that 'Previously events were the coordinates defining some concept, now they define an individual' (*The Formed Trace*, p. 108).

3. Rabaté writes that Mussolini's death 'leaves Pound orphaned, torn asunder in a world which can no longer reconcile the real with the symbolic' (*Language, Sexuality and Ideology*, p. 145).

4. Here I pass over the finer points of the distinction between Manicheanism and the cult of *amor* as Pound saw them. Pound would actually consider Manicheanism to be a regressive asceticism which held that 'the body is evil' ('Cavalcanti', p. 150), and so the crucifixion of Manes probably stands as an example of the violence of history rather than a repression of forces which Pound endorsed. For a discussion of this distinction see Makin, *Provence and Pound*, pp. 217-21.



details - "the great periplum brings in the stars to our shore " (p. 425). The instability of the self, or its 'regression' to archetype, might be seen as the poet's acknowledgement of his position as 'a man on whom the sun has gone down' (p. 430), a virtuous artist whose empowered 'microcosm' lay in ruins about him:

stone after stone of beauty cast down  
and authenticities disputed by parasites (p. 448)

and in Mt Segur there is wind space and rain space  
no more an altar to Mithras...  
and they have broken my house...  
and will the world ever take up its course again? (pp. 452-3)

As a lone ant from a broken ant-hill  
from the wreckage of Europe, ego scriptor...  
and the clouds over the Pisan meadows...  
[the barbarians] have not destroyed them  
as they have Sigismundo's temple... (pp. 458-9)

However, tragedy and failure again serve a double function here. At the same time that disaster strikes, Pound's recourse to an Odyssean persona places him outside the contingencies of history, for Odysseus, as canto LXXX states in Greek, is *achronos*, and his return during Pound's lengthy incarceration suggests that lines like 'now there are no more days' (p. 499) can be seen to inhabit both tragic and transcendental registers.

The actual and symbolic wreckage of history that Pound surveys will prompt a return to origins, but a return in which the tragic position of the poet as disabled 'scriptor', and the apparent dissociation of the vision from the real, facilitates a journey into his own writings as a pattern of sufficient and self-authorising 'details'. Introspection at this point becomes synonymous with a folding-back of the artwork onto its own foundations. It also neatly reconciles the categories of 'art' and 'life' by making Pound himself the subject of their coincidence. At the same time that the poet is imprisoned and the poem launched 'from the death cells in sight of Mt. Taishan @ Pisa' (p. 427), then, such entrapment opens a space where the artwork can test the authoritative endurance of its own metaphysics (as in the configuration of a sacred Chinese mountain in the Italian landscape). No longer the stage of history but of their own self-sufficient power, *The Pisan Cantos* exist as a vertiginous but vigorous intertextual attempt to witness 'Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell' (p. 521).

The early reference to the city of Dioce actually prepares the stage for a 'simple' reiteration of the mythic and metamorphic principles which had acted to ground *The Cantos*. Before canto LXXIV has run half its course a refusal to relinquish the visionary city reintroduces these themes:

I surrender neither the empire nor the temples plural  
nor the constitution nor yet the city of Dioce  
each one in his god's name  
as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her  
and from her manner of walking  
as had Anchises  
till the shrine be again white with marble  
till the stone eyes look again seaward... (pp. 434-5)

Both the emergence of the world through the artwork and the memory of manifestations of divinity are reasserted here by reference to earlier poetry. Allusions to the 'presence' of goddesses, and especially synechdochic allusions to Botticelli's *La Nascita* - signalled here by the 'sea Zephyr' - are prolific in the Pisan sequence, and re-invoke the metamorphic power of desire that had surfaced in 'Three Cantos'. However, the emphasis here and elsewhere is upon Pound's introspective ability to produce fragments of his own texts as recirculated evidence of 'certain images' which might, as in Cavalcanti's *Donna mi priegha*, be 'formed in the mind / to remain there / *formato locho*'.<sup>5</sup> By revisiting their own foundations and becoming the 'prepared place' where such images are augmented *The Cantos* insist upon the 'substantiality' of patterns of *virtù* and beauty that they had previously encoded. This writing now enacts the metamorphic logic of its own visionary principles, for once 'observed' and then *retained* such images can be considered 'manifest' - as the Pisan sequence insists, 'First came the seen, then thus the palpable / Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell'. Thus a reference to the recognition of the divine within the mundane - a goddess known 'from her manner of walking' - evokes Pound's own revelation in canto VII of theophanic communion with 'Nicea'. The theme of metamorphosis continues with the lines 'till the shrine be again white with marble / till the stone eyes look again seaward...', which invoke not only Pound's desire to 'replace the statue of Venus on the cliffs of Terracina' ('Credo') but the metamorphic canto XVII ('with her eyes seaward', p. 78) and its placing of the artist ('So that the vines burst from *my* fingers') at the centre of realised numinous transformation.

Paradise, despite its tragic (historical) fragmentation, remains available for Pound because - although the final canto would suggest failure ('I have tried to write paradise', p. 803) - in Pisa he considered that he had *already* written it. Thus at the centre of the first Pisan canto its endurance can be proclaimed even as it breaks down. Pound poses as the defending hierarch of his own rites, but an allusion to his own texts continues to underwrite the presence of the divine in the real:

but spezzato apparently

5. *Cantos*, p. 446, and p. 177. In *The Pisan Cantos* these lines follow a direct quotation from *Mauberley* - '... cheek bone by verbal manifestation' - and precede a reiteration of *Mauberley's* ideal 'to forge Achaia' (*Cantos*, p. 447, and already introduced on p. 444; see also *Shorter Poems*, p. 198 and p. 200).



it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage,  
the smell of mint , for example,  
Ladro the night cat;  
at Nemi waited on the slope above the lake sunken in the pocket of hills...  
Zarathustra, now desuete  
to Jupiter and to Hermes where now is the castellaro  
no vestige save in the air  
in stone is no imprint and the grey walls of no era  
under the olives  
saeculorum Athenae...  
olivi  
that which gleams and then does not gleam  
as the leaf turns in the air...<sup>6</sup>

As the 'grounded' vision tragically threatens to evaporate (there is 'no vestige' of the 'castle' save 'in the air') the intermittent 'gleam' of olive-leaves evokes the flashing eyes of Athena, patron of Odysseus, and the play of light that had featured in the transfiguration of the natural environment of the first of the 'Three Cantos': 'all agleam with colors - no, not agleam, / But colored like the lake and like the olive leaves / Glaukopos...' <sup>7</sup> Even the 'fragments' of the mundane environment as they impinge upon Pound at Pisa cannot help but be subject to its 'artwork' ('unexpected excellent sausage, / the smell of mint... / Ladro the night cat'). These details reassert the latency of the divine within the real (in the natural, in the sporadically sensual) and ensure that 'sausage' becomes an offering, mint a hieratic herb, and the cat a totem animal of the Dionysian artist. <sup>8</sup>

Through such self-reference and inter-reference *The Pisan Cantos* augment their metaphysics according to their own criteria. The 'ghosts' of Pound's writing now move about him as he ritualises his own 'histories', as another citation of 'Three Cantos' attests: "ghosts move about me" "patched with histories" (p. 446). But Pound's own introspective *periplum* has a substance all its own now. It takes shape through the names of companions (Madox Ford, Yeats, Eliot, Gaudier-Brzeska, Joyce, Hulme) and allows Pound's own memories to be ritualised. These names, like the artist of *virtù*'s efforts 'to

6. *Cantos*, p. 438. My introductory reference and the sixth line here allude to the opening of Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), which takes the periodic challenge to the priest of Diana at Nemi as the starting point of its exploration of myths of fertility and renewal; later Pound would dramatise the opening page of this work by imaging himself 'With drawn sword at Nemi' (*Cantos*, p. 467).

7. 'Three Cantos', p. 116. The relation of the play of light upon olive leaves to the theophany of the owl-eyed (*Glaukopos*) goddess Athena was taken from Allen Upward and treated at length by Pound in 'Allen Upward Serious' (*Selected Prose*, pp. 377-82). Pound criticism has also made much of this connection: see for instance Davie's *Ezra Pound*, pp. 71-4.

8. I implicitly take issue here with critics who consider 'nature' as it occurs in the Pisan sequence as that which retains its 'otherness' (in Lawrencean fashion) for Pound. Davie, for example, writes of Pound's observations of a wasp in canto LXXXIII that 'at no time does the wasp become a symbol for something in Pound's predicament' and suggests that it 'retains its otherness as an independent form of life' (*Poet as Sculptor*, pp. 176-7). Davie can only make this claim by ignoring Pound's mythic identification with its ethonic nature - Pound projects the wasp's ability to 'sing in the bower / of Kore' and 'to have speech with Tiresias' (p. 533). In the poet's renewed role as Odysseus he shares precisely these abilities, and the observed otherness of the wasp and other aspects of 'nature' in Pisa always, or potentially, collapse into an augmentation of the poet's own 'visionary' power. 'Nature' continues to be a product of *The Cantos'* artwork.

dream the Republic', can still stand for values and words 'not blacked out... those words still stand uncanceled' (p. 479). They potently enter the textual ritual of history as *The Cantos* present it, for ideogrammic technique had constantly transformed names into authoritative signs (Sigismundo, Confucius, Jefferson) whose recurrence denoted historical activity and effect.<sup>9</sup> Despite, or even because of the death of many of Pound's companions (they are 'Lordly men... to earth o'ergiven', p. 432) and the apparent rupture with historical time that his own imprisonment is 'symptomatic' of, these names now enter *The Cantos*' vocabulary as 'luminous' and undying details which grant Pound's own epoch access to the (now, again, historically 'repressed') *sagetrieb*.

Recollection, memory and affection figure large in this sequence, but their appearance inevitably signals processes of aesthetic ritualisation. 'What thou lovest well remains, / the rest is dross' (p. 520-21) the sequence insists, and 'If deeds be not ensheaved and garnered in the heart / there is inanition' (p. 531). But to become 'ensheaved' in the affections or memory does not mean to become manifest *merely* within 'the mind indestructible' (p. 442) in *The Pisan Cantos*, for the locus of affection and memory is not the subject but the *verification* of subjective experience within the artwork. Art's ability to verify transcriptions of experience enters *The Pisan Cantos* as a fragment flanked by obscure references to the war and characters in the compound; the concerns of this fragment, the setting suggests, should need no reiteration:

if they have not destroyed them  
with Galla's rest, and...

is measured by the *to whom* it happens  
and to what, and if to a work of art  
then to all who have seen and who will not

Washington, Adams, Tyler, Polk... (p. 455)

Subjective experience can only be authorised and 'measured' by artistic form, and such form has always anticipated the experience and is the place that it endures:

... the drama is wholly subjective  
stone knowing the form that the carver imparts it  
the stone knows the form...  
a man on whom the sun has gone down  
nor shall diamond die in the avalanche  
be it torn from its setting... (p. 430)

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9. In 'ABC of Economics' (*Selected Prose*, pp. 203-34) Pound would cite the fascist dictum that 'We are tired of a government in which there is no responsible person having a hind name, a front name and an address' (p. 231), and *The Pisan Cantos* acknowledge Pound's companions as 'responsible' in 'having a front name, a hind name and an address' (p. 479). Rabaté discusses the notion of names going 'into action' in the Pisan sequence and raises the idea that here names also function ritualistically; see *Language, Sexuality and ideology*, especially, p. 175 and p. 180.



Even the recollection of desire, as in a memory of H. D. (Hilda Doolittle or the 'dryad') lyricised through comparison to the skyscape, must be 'rooted', through the metamorphic echoes of canto XVII and its vision of a 'forest of marble' (p. 78), which helps locate the artwork of the paradisal 'city' within, beneath and prior to all emotion, perception and conception:

[Dryad], your eyes are like the clouds over Taishan  
When some of the rain has fallen  
and half remains yet to fall

The roots go down to the river's edge  
and the hidden city moves upward  
white ivory under the bark (p. 530)

Despite the deprived environment of Pisa, then, the gods of 'Three Cantos' are still 'afloat' in the air. The air trembles (*l'aer tremare*, p. 444) but the trembling merely testifies to the *clarity* of metamorphic experience ("*fa di clarità l'aer tremare*", p. 448). There is even a repetition upon the theme of 'air' which hints ironically at the imprisoned artist's limitation -

and the clouds over the Pisan meadows  
are indubitably as fine as any... (p. 459)

The Pisan clouds are undoubtedly various  
and splendid as any I have seen... (p. 466)

- but the air is a 'timeless' and ubiquitous medium which provides the stage for the celebration of an art which will always body-forth its own 'de-authorised' divinities:

in the timeless air over the sea-cliffs...  
but this air brought her ashore a la marina  
with the great shell borne on the seawaves  
nautilus biancastra  
By no means an orderly Dantescan rising  
but as the winds veer... (p. 443)

The 'introspection' of Pisa does not initiate self-critique but aesthetic self-authorisation for Pound - 'remember that I have remembered', he writes, 'and pass on the tradition' (p. 506). Pisa had not diminished but re-focused the luminous details available to the poet and expanded the domain where he could claim to be 'lord of his work and master of utterance'. 'To have gathered from the air a live tradition... This is not vanity' (p. 522) he still insists, and so 'the city of Dioce' need not be surrendered. What becomes evident at Pisa is that crises in history, like crises in discourse, are still utilised in one direction only by Pound. Power flows *outwards* from the unauthorised artist and artwork, and the figural transformations that art performs upon the real remain impervious to any modification or qualification that the authority of an extrinsic history might impose upon them. In Pisa Pound

elaborates his *own* tradition and reprocesses his own writings, perhaps realising fully for the first time the power of an aesthetics that grounds itself upon nothing more than the artifice of its own operations. This power still resides in an aesthetic that does not reflect upon but only recirculates its own content, but now the vision *cannot* turn outward, for it has itself become 'a little light from the borders' of history. As Pound himself acknowledged later in *The Cantos*, he had finally given shape to an aesthetics so undetermined by authority, so self-empowered, that they were no longer a 'zone of activity' but a static and cumbersome ornament:

I have brought the great ball of crystal;  
who can lift it? (p. 795)



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